	respite care providers, to include exploring raising the rates paid for respite care. 2. CA should mandate caregivers be given 24-48 hours' notice when meetings or visitation schedules are changed.		
3:05 – 3:30	FPAWS: 1. Shared Decision-Making Meetings (SDMM) 2. Re-Homing Concerns		
3:30 – 3:55	CA: 1. New WAC Info – Krissy Wright 2. Workgroup for FP Rights and Responsibilities WSR 18-03-055.pdf DLR WACs for CR 101 for January 2018.		Krissy Wright
3:55 – 4:00	Facilitator's Wrap Up		

Next Meeting Date: Monday, April 16, 2018, 1:00 – 4:00 P.M.

Continuing Areas of Concern to Watch (drawn from prior meetings – not scheduled for discussion at this meeting)

Topic	Regional Area
Continuing Child Care Crisis	Region 1 North
Permanency for Children	Region 1 North

From: Waterhouse, Meri (DSHS/CA)

To: Aaron Edwards
Alla Mishin CW 13:50:100 @gmail.com)

AMY GARDNER
Beth Canfield
Bogart, Michelle (DSHS/CA)
Canfield, Mike
Christiansen, Michelle A (DSHS/CA)
Chung, Yuan (DSHS/CA)

Chung, Xuan (DSHS/CA)
Churchwell, Jason (DSHS/CA)
Corrales, Marissa (DSHS/CA)

Daniel Garcia

<u>Devoy</u>, <u>Peggy</u> (<u>DSHS/CA</u>) <u>Effland</u>, Ron (<u>DSHS/CA</u>)

Fernandez, Arthur (UW Alliance)

Geiger, Barbara (DSHS/CA)
Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA)

Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA)

Hannon, Denise E (DSHS/CA)

Hunt, Anne (DSHS/CA)

Hurd, Dorene (DSHS/CA)

Jean Brownell

Jennings, Robin S. (DSHS/CA)

Johnson, Bolesha R. (DSHS/CA)

Johnson, Silvia (DSHS/CA)

Kim Fordham (kfordham@ewu.edu)

Kincaid, Jeff (DSHS/CA)

LaBelle, Nicole (DSHS/CA)

Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Lawlor, Yen (DSHS/CA)

Leeann Marshel

Lisa Page

Luke Wickham

Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA)

March, John (DSHS/CA)

Marzest, Yolanda

McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA)

Megan Caswell RCW 13.50.100 @gmail.com)

Melissa Russell

Michael Tyers

Michael Wittry

Needham, David A. (DSHS/CA)

Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Pemberton, Jon C. (DSHS/CA)

Perez, Dorene (DSHS/CA)

Pritchard, Darla E (DSHS/CA)

R.C. Laird

Ramsay, Kathy (DSHS/CA)

Ray Deck 3

Ray Deck III

Rhodes, Chris (DSHS/CA)

Rissone, Joseph (DSHS/CA)

Robert Hunner

Robinson, Lynn (DSHS/CA)

Sara Robitaille (SRobitaille@coordinatedcarehealth.com)

Sebastian, Toni (DSHS/CA)

Shala Crow

Shanna Alvarez

Sheryl Herd

Stephanie Vombaur

Tacchini, Jeanine M (DSHS/CA)

Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA)

Teena Williams

Teeter, Anita (DSHS/CA)

Thomas, Joyce (DSHS/CA)

Tosti-Lane, Linda (DSHS/CA)

Tovar, Maria D (DSHS/CA)

Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA)

Tyler Helbach

Van Veen, Hannahlyn J. (DSHS/CA)

Victoria O'Banion RCW 13.50.100 @gmail.com)

Waterhouse, Meri (DSHS/CA)

Welch, Maribel (DSHS/CA)

Wright, Kristina (DSHS/CA)

Date: 2/20/2018 6:26:27 PM

Subject: CAFPT(1624) Minutes January 22 2018

Attachments: CAFPT(1624) Minutes January 22 2018.docx

Attached are the Minutes from the January 1624 meeting. Our debrief meeting is next Monday, Jan. 26, 2018, 9 – 10:00 a.m.

Conference Call number is: 1-641-715-3690 PIN:



Meri Waterhouse / Program Manager / Foster Care Recruitment & Retention Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

1115 Washington St., S.E. / PO Box 45710

Olympia, WA 98504-5710

360-902-8035 / waterml@dshs.wa.gov

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CAFPT (1624) VIDEO CONFERENCE MEETING

Minutes

January 22, 2018, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Conference ID: RCW 42.56 230(5) and Access Code: RCW 42.56.230(5) Phone access only - call: 360-902-7510 PIN: RCW 42.56:230(5)

Team Members:

X	Victoria O'Banion		Alla Mishin		Pending		Pending	Х	Ray Deck	Х	Lisa Page	X	Aaron Edwards	Х	Shanna Alvarez
	Reg. 1 N.		Reg. 1 N.		Reg. 1 S.		Reg. 1 S.		Reg. 2 N.		Reg. 2 N.		Reg. 2 S.		Reg. 2 S.
X	Teena Williams Reg. 3 N.	X	Krista Piger Reg. 3 N.	X	Amy Gardner Reg. 3 S.		Stephanie Vombaur Reg. 3 S.	Х	Beth Canfield FPAWS	X	Mike Canfield FPAWS				
	Connie Lambert- Eckel Act. Assist. Sec., CA	X	Toni Sebastian Dir. P & Policy CA	X	Barb Geiger Office Chief CA	X	Jeff Kincaid RA, Reg. 1 CA		Natalie Green RA, Reg. 2 CA		Joel Odimba RA, Reg. 3 CA	X	Darcey Hancock Acting Field Ops Director, CA	Х	Ron Effland Acting DLR Admin CA
X	Meri Waterhouse FP R & R PM CA	X	Becky Taylor DLR PM, CA		Reg. 1 North First Alternate: Megan Caswell	x	Reg. 2 South First Alternate: Daniel J. Garcia		Reg. 2 South Second Alternate: Michael Wittry		Reg. 3 South First Alternate: Sheryl Herd		Reg. 3 South Second Alternate: RC Laird		

Guests:

Region 1 N: Chris Rhodes - CA, Shannon Boniface - CA, Amber Sherman - Fostering WA,

Region 1 S: Denise Hannon - CA, Tyann Whitworth - Fostering WA,

Region 2 N: Hannah Van Veen - CA, Shala Crow - Fostering Together, Yen Lawlor - DRA Reg. 2 No. (for Natalie Green),

Reg. 2 S: Joyce Thomas - CA, Yolanda Marzest - Alliance, Michael Tyers - Alliance; Jean Brownell, Alliance

Reg. 3 S: Peggy Devoy - CA,

Reg. 3 N: Anita Teeter, CA -- DRA, Lynn Robinson -- CA, John March, CA -- DRA (for Joel Odimba); Reuben Reeves -- CA/DLR,

HQ: Anne Hunt – CATS, Darcey Hancock – CA, Gor Connie Lambert-Eckel, Alexis Arambul – Leg Aide for Rep. Caldier, Brandy Otto – CA, Shelley Arneson – CA, Debbie Marker – CA, Amy Case – RDA, Jenny Heddin, CA Arthur Fernandez – Alliance, Barb Geiger – CA

Phone: Pam McKeown - CA; Sarah Robitaille - Coordinated Care, Alla Mishin - Reg. 1

*	Materials included as attachments in en	nail	Decision	Decision / additional action required			
<u>Time</u>	Agenda Item & Presenter	Purpose D – Decision U – Update I – Information	Outcome A – Approved NS – Not Supported T – Tabled	<u>Follow-up task(s)</u>	Who is responsible/ due date		
1:00 – 1:10	Welcome / Roll Call Bob Hunner (welcome/intros of new FP Reps)	Participation Quorum Present?	A quorum consists of at least th	ree fourths of the total number of me	mbers (18 of 24)		
l:10 – l:25	Update on transition to DCYF	U					
			Old Business				
<u>Time</u>	Agenda Item & Presenter	Purpose D – Decision U – Update	Outcome A – Approved NS – Not Supported T – Tabled	Follow-up task(s)	Who is responsible/ <u>Due Date</u>		

1:25 - 1:50	Civility/Respect/Communications	U			
1:50	Region 2 South Vision Statement – Timelines to Permanency - Connie Lambert-Eckel held a meeting, where participants discussed relevant legal issues, including Disclosure of Case Information to FPs. Another meeting has been scheduled to discuss permanency issues. (3 minutes)	U		Next meeting with 1624 Reps is set: 1/30/18 @ 11:00 a.m., OB-2, Exec. Conf. Room (call-in # available soon)	Connie Lambert-Eckel Completed 1/30/18
	CA will explore other jurisdictions' use of whistleblower policies/practices and/or mediation for reports of retaliation by CA workers. (3 minutes)	U		No other jurisdictions were found that had anonymous whistleblower policies. Following due process is important.	None
	"So you have a new placement" Sub- committee Report (3 minutes)	U		Moved to "Continuing Areas of Concern"	Bob Hunner
	Changes at the CA Technology services help desk to support "Our Kids" mobile app (6 minutes)	U		Including accurate court information (dates) is a strong request from CAFPT representatives. CA has hired new clerical staff to improve data input.	
				Anne Hunt requested a subgroup to advise CATs regarding app features, including electronic submission of court reports.	Ray Deck III, Aaron Edwards, and Victoria O'Banion volunteered to participate
	New Business	– Each regional area	may bring up to two (2) agenda	a items for discussion/action.	
	Region 1 North: No new items this quarter				
	Region 1 South: No new items this quarter				
1:50- 2:15	Region 2 North: 1. Mediation available for strained SW/FP relationships 2. Communication with FP regarding court dates			None Toni Sebastian will develop a template for court reports to share with AOC. No date.	2. Toni Sebastian
	Notes:			ı	1

- 1. The possibility of hiring trained (professional) mediators was discussed. Also, using the Recruitment and Retention contractors' liaisons as mediators was suggested. A final suggestion was that the upcoming RFP for Recruitment and Retention should include caregiver/CA staff mediation as an additional service requirement.
- 2. Earlier notice about court dates and the process of submitting court reports were discussed. It was recognized that court dates often change very quickly and often on the day of the hearing, with continuances, etc. A request for a better feedback loop from courts to caregivers and back was made. It was suggested that the Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care be approached to discuss three issues: changes in visitation, changes in the plan, and notifications regarding changes in court dates.

<u>Time</u>	Agenda Item & Presenter	Purpose D – Decision U – Update I – Information	<u>Outcome</u> A – Approved NS – Not Supported T – Tabled	Follow-up task(s)	<u>Who is responsible/</u> <u>due date</u>
2:15 – 2:40	Region 2 South: 1. Timelines to permanency			Meeting with Connie Lambert- Eckel on January 30.	Completed on 1-30-18
	2. Foster Parent Advocacy	I		2. None	

Notes:

1. Region 2 S would like to develop a research project on the Timelines to Permanency framework. The research project would include a range of stakeholders (birth parents, foster parents, Partners for our Children, Area Administrators, Ombuds Office, CASAs, along with CA leadership and others.

Pinch points that have been identified include: 1) staff turnover; 2) courts are independent of the child welfare system; 3) the state has specific permanency timelines; 4) the federal government imposes permanency timelines.

Apparently full family searches aren't being done and often take many months to accomplish.

2. Foster parent advocacy: Several CAFPT representatives discussed the availability of advocates for foster parents. They indicated they would like more/better information disseminated about 1624 membership, activities, and meetings.

Region 3 North: No new items this quarter			
2:40- 3:05 1. Lack of adequate respite care resources is leading to disrupted placements and has become a retention issue. We ask that CA explore ways to better incentivize respite care providers, to include exploring raising the rates paid for respite care. 2. CA should mandate caregivers be	Jenny Heddin affirmed CA's recognition of the capacity problem. A CA agrees.	Jenny and Toni will obtain rates and Meri will distribute Request a Practice Tip on the use and the right of caregivers to refuse to allow a child to be transported without an	3. Toni Sebastian

	meetings or visitation schedules are changed.		Caregivers with complaints should use the contractor complaint forms	Amy Gardner will send her documentation of problems to Darcey Hancock.	No date		
	 Notes: Several issues were raised: Why does it take so long to get paid? (Some caregivers have waited more than 6 months for their payments. Differs by region.) Payments are authorized locally. It was mentioned that Region 2 North has an excellent payment process. Information was shared on how foster parents should raise the delayed payment up the chain and to include the fiduciary. Why respite care is a flat rate, rather than tiered? Payments are based on the child's monthly rate. One of the problems that CA has with respite providers is that receiving care and respite homes often become permanent placements and, therefore, aren't available for respite. Fostering Together has developed support groups that help out with respite. Regarding the ongoing problem with transporters not having appropriate car seats, it was suggested that CA could develop a "Practice Tip" and/or FAQ about their use and the right of caregivers to refuse to allow a child to be transported without an appropriate seat. 						
3:05 – 3:30	FPAWS: 1. Shared Decision-Making Meetings (SDMM)						
	2. Re-Homing Concerns			Toni Sebastian will study this issue and report back at the next CAFPT meeting.	April 16, 2018		
	Notes: In matters where caregivers have been investigated by DLR, Mike Canfield expressed the perception among many foster parents that the system isn't objective and that investigations aren't always comprehensive. He also asked about the options that are offered at the end of a founded situation: relinquishment vs. revocation. He suggested that objective observers be allowed to participate in the process. While rare, sometimes parents who have adopted a child from foster care are unable to continue to care for the child. Rather than contacting CA or their placement agency for support or assistance, parents are "rehoming" the child – giving the child to a relative or friend—to solve the problem. What is CA doing about this? If CA isn't notified, the child's new home will not receive adoption support (if the new family adopts).						
<u>Time</u>	Agenda Item & Presenter	Purpose D – Decision U – Update I – Information	<u>Outcome</u> A – Approved NS – Not Supported T – Tabled	Follow-up task(s)	Who is responsible/ due date		
3:30 -	CA:						

	DLR WACs for CR 101 for January 2018.							
	Notes: Regional representatives would like notice of proposed WAC changes at the earliest possible date.							
3:55 – 4:00	Facilitator's Wrap Up							

Next Meeting Date: Monday, April 16, 2018, 1:00 – 4:00 P.M.

Continuing Areas of Concern to Watch (drawn from prior meetings – not scheduled for discussion at this meeting)

Topic	Regional Area
Continuing Child Care Crisis	Region 1 North
Permanency for Children	Region 1 North
"So you have a new placement"	FPAWS

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Beth Canfield

Date: 1/3/2017 4:20:04 PM

Subject: RE: Follow up from our meeting

Hi Beth.

Thanks for letting me know and Happy New Year!! C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Beth Canfield [mailtoRCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net]

Sent: Thursday, December 29, 2016 2:34 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: 'Mike Canfiled' RCW 13 50.100 @comcast.net>; RCW 42.56.250(4) | RCW 42.56.250(4) @aol.com>; Kagi, Ruth

<ruth.kagi@leg.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Follow up from our meeting

Rep. Kagi has talked with us about possible foster parent supports that might be a part of the bill she is working on. We are asking for:

1. Recruiting and training foster parent support people, similar to a case aide except a part of their job description would be to support the foster family in order to support the foster children. The case aide role today often times causes the families more stress rather than any support.

This resource person would ask the foster parent what they need. So if they are fostering a baby that doesn't sleep very much they could ask for nap time support for the parent or time over night allowing them to get a healthy amount of sleep and avoid the need to move them. Another goal would be that the caregiver support person would be trained in infants & infant sleep allowing them the ability to share knowledge that might be helpful to the parent.

A foster family might have one of the many 4 year olds with very high needs and they might ask for help with the kids doing well, so that they can spend some one on one time with the challenging 4 year old so that behaviors can improve and there is no move needed. There could also be temporary safety concern i.e.: biting or hitting which they could use help with supervision while they are cooking dinner or getting house hold chores done, allowing them a lot less stress. Etc. etc.

Some possibilities could include using already experienced liaisons, case aides and retired foster parents using the new job description.

- 2. Many of the "retaliation" issues for caregivers would lesson if there was assurance that:
 - a. Complete investigations are done when there is a complaint which would include interviewing everyone that is a major part of the child's life and include those interviews in the report. This would include teachers, day cares, therapists and social workers.
 - b. Confidentially is maintained.
 - c. Decisions are made on facts.
 - d. That caregivers are treated with respect and kindness during this process.
 - e. Create an oversight committee.
- 3. Allow a caregiver in the licensing process to complete more training hours that would count toward Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002126 their first 3 year training requirements, prior to completing the license.

4. If a caregiver is advocating for their kids, are asking questions (that might feel intimidating) and trying to understand the system it would be better to see that as a teaching opportunity rather than labeling them as a "trouble parent", which has led to retaliation and caregivers leaving.

I believe that had there been respectful communication with would not feeling this, "It does not feel like respect when someone yanks our license, takes our children and tell us it was because we needed a break.

Had there been honest clear communication and respect it could have been handled in a teaming way that would have included Rew 13.50.100 and her needs. There were more options that would have met everyone's needs and could have avoided the pain this has caused the kids and the family.

The many caregivers we hear from are not making up how they have been talked to and treated, which often times led to them waiting for kids to move on before they quit. Maybe including a training for CPS workers and Licensors on dealing with their feelings and biases before they work with a caregiver. Remember this is one story of many.

Mike wants to add that he is hearing stories about this particular licensor that would draw her personality/charactor into question. People in meetings with her report needing to be careful what is said as you don't know which personality will show up.

Thanks a ton for listening,

Beth Canfield

President Foster Parents Association of Washington State www.fpaws.org

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of WA State is an all volunteer non-profit association. It is led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. In addition, FPAWS advocates for caregivers with Washington's legislative officials, all levels of Children's Administration staff and other community service providers to enhance the child welfare system. Contact **FPAWS** at **fpaws.org** or **1-800-391-CARE** (2273).

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) [mailto:LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, December 27, 2016 4:08 PM
To: Beth Canfield; RCW 13.50.100'
Subject: RE: Follow up from our meeting

Hello again ladies...

I hope you both had a peaceful and pleasant holiday.

In response to your question below I ask that you please refer to the Stipulated Settlement Agreement and Order that was agreed to and signed by all the parties on July 13, 2016. In addition to providing direction that children are not to be placed in the family foster home (we discussed this at our meeting....#3 in the Stipulation section) the settlement agreement goes on to specify when the Department/CA will reassess the family home for re-licensure and the ability of the home to continue to care for foster children. Section #4 states: Appellants' foster care license expires on August 5, 2017. Appellants will need to renew their license at the time if they wish to continue to be licensed foster parents. The renewal will be a reassessment of the Appellants' character and suitability to continue to care for foster children, and as such there is no guarantee the Department will approve Appellants' foster care license renewal at that time.

We will continue to follow the agreement as it is written and will not engage in a separate process to renegotiate this agreement. As you are well aware the re-licensing process commences well in advance of the license 'end date'. I have every confidence that you will be well engaged in the process when the time comes.

Thank you and best wishes for the New Year. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Beth Canfield [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net]

Sent: Friday, December 23, 2016 6:02 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Cc: RCW 42.56.250(4) RCW 42.56.250(4) @aol.com>

Subject: RE: Follow up from our meeting

Did they explain wh RCW 13.50.100

We are both confused. Thanks a ton for looking into this, as I said this is one of many

similar stories across the state.

Beth

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) [mailto:LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov]

Sent: Friday, December 23, 2016 2:57 PM To: 'Beth Canfield' RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net)

Subject: Follow up from our meeting

Importance: High

Greetings Ms. Canfield and RCW 42.56.250(4) (Beth...will you please get this message to RCW 42.56.250(4). I don't have her email)

Thank you again for our meeting on December 20th, 2016. In addition to sharing with me your story and related concerns regarding your foster care license you expressed specific concerns about what you identified as a character/competency/suitability review conducted in your case. You indicated that you felt a process had been engaged that would prevent relicensing next summer that you did not understand and did not actively participate in.

I reviewed your current circumstances and consulted with the Administrator for the Division of Licensed Resources, Darcey Hancock regarding your assertion that a 'character' review had been conducted regarding your ability to provide licensed foster care.

We believe that the WAC 388-148-1365 has been too broadly interpreted by some to mean that a 'character review' process occurs in some instances. In fact this particular WAC reference is most commonly used when we assess applicants for licensure/re-licensure. There is not a separate 'character' review process and it would be extremely rare for 'character' ever to be used as the sole basis for consideration of a license revocation. Character is a part of the overall assessment of a caregiver at the time of both initial licensing and renewals. This WAC, as you may know, states:

388-148-1365 | What are the character and personal requirements for foster parents?

- (1) You must be at least twenty-one years old to apply for a license.
- (2) You must demonstrate you have:
- (a) The understanding, ability, physical health, emotional stability and personality suited to meet the physical, mental, emotional, cultural, and social needs of children under your care; Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002128

- (b) The ability to furnish children with a nurturing, respectful, and supportive environment; and
- (c) Sufficient regular income to maintain your own family, without the foster care reimbursement made for the children in your care.
- (3) You may not use drugs or alcohol, whether legal or illegal, in a manner that affects your ability to provide safe care to children.

I have been assured that DLR has **not** already determined that you will not be relicensed next summer when your license is up for renewal and we will follow up to make sure our staff understand that. We share your concern that staff are sharing this information with you as if it were a fact. CA/ DLR acknowledge your service to children over the past many years and were very concerned over the stress you experienced in your family circumstances in the past couple years. It seems that things are settling down for you now.

Next summer you can expect to undergo a regular re-licensing review/assessment process as you have in years past....a process that requires your engagement and cooperation.

Take care and thank you again for your time earlier this week and now. I wish you both the best the holidays have to offer and hope for a wonderful new year. Connie.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982 From: King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 1/6/2017 1:34:12 AM

Subject: RE: Briefing - per your request.

Hi Ms. Lambert-Eckel,

We had our meeting today regarding the home. Due to the circumstance with the disclosure request can you please give me a call when you have a moment at 253-372-6001. Thank you!

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) **Sent:** Tuesday, December 27, 2016 11:57 AM

To: King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA) <kingcle@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: Briefing - per your request.

Here you go....thanks again for the chat and the follow up info yet to come from your staffing. *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Tuesday, December 27, 2016 11:35 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Harder, Diana (DSHS/EXEC) < hardedx@dshs.wa.gov">; Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) < <u>HitchED@dshs.wa.gov</u>;

Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA) < CrakeDr@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Briefing - per your request.

Connie -

Here is a briefing per your request. Let me know if you need any further information.

Diane Craker

Constituent Relations Program Manager

Executive Staff Division
Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360 902-8455 <u>crakedr@dshs.wa.gov</u>

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nttps.//www.surveymonkey.com/i/CAESDSORVE

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)
Sent: Tuesday, December 27, 2016 8:05 AM

To: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) < TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov >; Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA) < CrakeDr@dshs.wa.gov >;

Gunnell, Kim (DSHS/CA) < MowerKL@dshs.wa.gov Cc: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) < Hitchings, Abrigate West/Abramo, Alegia

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002130 Subject: FW: Another retaliation

Greetings ladies...

Got this message over the weekend. I am very interested in a summary and assessment of this case from your perspective. I will be following up with the region and DLR but need some perspective before doing so. Many thanks, *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Beth Canfield [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net]

Sent: Sunday, December 25, 2016 12:47 PM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS) < strusj@dshs.wa.gov>; Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)">LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Another retaliation

Please let me know what you think about how to support this family and address how they were treated. Thanks a ton, Beth

From: Newburn, Melody [mailto:mnewburn@spu.edu]

Sent: Saturday, December 24, 2016 12:09 PM

To: Beth Canfield

Cc: fpaws@fpaws.org; RCW 42.56.250(4)

Subject: RE: Foster parent requesting advocacy assistance

Thanks, Beth! see Beth's response below.

Mel

----- Original message -----

From: Beth Canfield < RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net>

Date: 12/24/16 11:10 AM (GMT-08:00)

To: "Newburn, Melody" < mnewburn@spu.edu>

Cc: fpaws@fpaws.org

Subject: RE: Foster parent requesting advocacy assistance

We will do all that we can to help you. There will be limited access to CA until after Christmas so you will not be hearing much of anything until then, I will let you know as soon as we get responses. I am sorry for your pain. Take care,

Beth Canfield

President Foster Parents Association of Washington State www.fpaws.org

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of WA State is an all volunteer non-profit association. It is led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. In addition, FPAWS advocates for caregivers with Washington's legislative officials, all levels of Children's Administration staff and other community service providers to enhance the child welfare system. Contact **FPAWS** at **fpaws.org** or **1-800-391-CARE** (2273).

From: Newburn, Melody [mailto:mnewburn@spu.edu] Sent: Saturday, December 24, 2016 8:48 AM

To: fpaws@fpaws.org

Subject: Foster parent requesting advocacy assistance

Dear FPAWS,

The below summary and request for help is made by RCW 42.56.250(4), one of the foster parents attending the Fostering Together Kent Support Group. Per her request, I am also attaching the police report from the investigation, a TIC Sheet, and a release of information. I am dropping the last two documents in today's mail so that you will have the originals.

via email at RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com, and I have also cc-ed her to this email. You can reach

Thank you!

Mel Newburn Kent Support Group Facilitator

Summary:

We had a foster child placed with us Oct 2015, RCW 13.50.100. We also had his baby brother. We took them both to keep siblings together. This SW was horrible, and we were later advised she'd been fired. Ultimately, the supervisor took over, Desiree Salinas. She was a brand new supervisor. Without having a FTDM and without even giving us any notice, Desiree arranged to move baby to paternal grandparents.

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She never considered RCW 13.50.100 needs. He was parentified and his identify was tied up in being a big brother. He regressed immensely when his brother was taken from him.

We spoke to our licensor at the time. He told us that we could go to the Omsbudman, but that we would face retaliation. We chose not to, at that time because we didn't want the retaliation.

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Then on Sept 27, 2016, our world fell apart.

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The next day, was feeling better. We sent him to school. The school reported us for child abuse calling the rash, bruises. The SW took him that day advising that she'd bring him back. She said she knew us and that we would never hurt him. She lied. She never brought him back. She stopped talking to us. She refused to give us any further information. Any communication with us from then on, was with Desiree Salinas on the email.

While the investigation was pending, we got an email from SW (Erin Yanus) that said the following:



After the investigation is completed, regardless of the outcome, The Department will not be returning to your home. We appreciate all the support that you offered him.

I am not able to discuss the case with you further.

Thank you, Erin

Erin Yanus Dept. of Children and Family Services Social Worker III 1313 West Meeker St #102 MS: N43-4 Kent, WA 98032

yanusew@dshs.wa.gov Cell: 253-302-2308 Fax: 253-372-6018

The SW did not care about the completion of an investigation. She did not care what was in he best interest of the child. In the police report, she lied to the detective saying I had not told her about the rash/doctor visit, and she described me as "an oversharer." I am a lawyer. I read the WACs, and I expect them to adhere to them. I advocate for my children and attempt to hold people accountable. They've never appreciated that. The investigation is now complete. The allegations were unfounded. The police reports are attached to give an unbiased perspective of what a trained detective determined.

What we need help with:

We are being retaliated against. Desiree Salinas has been an absolute bully since we got her in trouble initially. We want to fight this.

We want help getting RCW 13.50.100 home.

We want to know what we can do? What steps can we take?

What other avenues can we exercise?

How do we file an Omsbudman complaint?

Help!

We are more than willing to hire an attorney, file suit, etc. Advice on next steps? Attorneys who have been successful?

RCW 42.56.250(4)

Fiat justitia ruat caelum

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: <u>Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA)</u> King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA)

Date: 1/6/2017 5:25:11 PM

Subject: RE: Briefing - per your request.

Hi Natalie...

This foster family elevated their concerns regarding the removal of this child (related to DLR CPS investigation) to FPAWs. I asked for the case summary/briefing from CA constituent relations. I that report I was advised that Mr. King was talking with the f/p and had a staffing planned. I contacted Mr. King and we briefly discussed the fact that we still have a child with reportedly inflicted injuries with no ability to know how they occurred (child is unreliable witness and there were 'no findings' made in the investigation). The case is complicated, the child is challenging to serve. I asked to be advised of the outcome of the internal staffing so I can follow up with FPAWs. Thanks, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel
Director: Field Operations
Children's Administration
lambecm@dshs.wa.gov
360-902-7982

From: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Thursday, January 5, 2017 5:43 PM

To: King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA) <kingcle@dshs.wa.gov>; Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

<LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Williams, Demetric F (DSHS/CA) <WILLIDF1@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Briefing - per your request.

What is this about - I am not familiar with this situation. I have read the emails below?

From: King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, January 5, 2017 5:34 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Williams, Demetric F (DSHS/CA) < WILLIDF1@dshs.wa.gov >; Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA)

<GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV>

Subject: RE: Briefing - per your request.

Hi Ms. Lambert-Eckel,

We had our meeting today regarding the request can you please give me a call when you have a moment at 253-372-6001. Thank you!

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)
Sent: Tuesday, December 27, 2016 11:57 AM

To: King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA) < kingcle@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: Briefing - per your request.

Here you go....thanks again for the chat and the follow up info yet to come from your staffing. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Tuesday, December 27, 2016 11:35 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Cc: Harder, Diana (DSHS/EXEC) < hardedx@dshs.wa.gov >; Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) < hitchED@dshs.wa.gov >;

Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA) < crakeDr@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Briefing - per your request.

Connie -

Here is a briefing per your request. Let me know if you need any further information.

Diane Craker

Constituent Relations Program Manager

Executive Staff Division

Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360 902-8455 <u>crakedr@dshs.wa.gov</u>

Tell us how we are doing by clicking on the link and taking this short anonymous survey https://www.surveymonkev.com/r/CAESDSURVEY

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)
Sent: Tuesday, December 27, 2016 8:05 AM

To: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) < TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov >; Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA) < CrakeDr@dshs.wa.gov >;

Subject: FW: Another retaliation

Greetings ladies...

Got this message over the weekend. I am very interested in a summary and assessment of this case from your perspective. I will be following up with the region and DLR but need some perspective before doing so. Many thanks, *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982 From: Beth Canfield [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net]

Sent: Sunday, December 25, 2016 12:47 PM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS) <strusj@dshs.wa.gov>; Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Another retaliation

Please let me know what you think about how to support this family and address how they were treated. Thanks a ton, Beth

From: Newburn, Melody [mailto:mnewburn@spu.edu]
Sent: Saturday, December 24, 2016 12:09 PM

To: Beth Canfield

Cc: fpaws@fpaws.org; RCW 42.56.250(4)

Subject: RE: Foster parent requesting advocacy assistance

Thanks, Beth! see Beth's response below.

Mel

----- Original message -----

From: Beth Canfield < RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net >

Date: 12/24/16 11:10 AM (GMT-08:00)

To: "Newburn, Melody" < mnewburn@spu.edu>

Cc: <u>fpaws@fpaws.org</u>

Subject: RE: Foster parent requesting advocacy assistance

We will do all that we can to help you. There will be limited access to CA until after Christmas so you will not be hearing much of anything until then, I will let you know as soon as we get responses. I am sorry for your pain. Take care,

Beth Canfield

President Foster Parents Association of Washington State www.fpaws.org

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of WA State is an all volunteer non-profit association. It is led by experienced caregivers who provide support and helpful services to all caregivers (foster, adoptive, and kinship) in Washington State. In addition, FPAWS advocates for caregivers with Washington's legislative officials, all levels of Children's Administration staff and other community service providers to enhance the child welfare system. Contact **FPAWS** at **fpaws.org** or **1-800-391-CARE** (2273).

From: Newburn, Melody [mailto:mnewburn@spu.edu]

Sent: Saturday, December 24, 2016 8:48 AM

To: fpaws@fpaws.org

CC: RCW 42.56.250(4)

Subject: Foster parent requesting advocacy assistance

Dear FPAWS,

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You can reach via email at RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com, and I have also cc-ed her to this email.

Thank you!

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Kent Support Group	Facilitator

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Kent, WA 98032

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RCW 42.56.250(4)

Fiat justitia ruat caelum

From: Dowd, Patrick (GOV)

To: Lashway, Patricia (DSHS)

Strus, Jennifer (DSHS)

Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 1/6/2017 10:40:28 PM

Subject: FW: OFCO 2016 Annual report

Attachments: 2015-2016 OFCO Annual Report.pdf

Attached is an advance copy of the Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds (OFCO) 2016 Annual Report. This report will be made public on Wednesday, January 11, 2017. It will be posted on OFCO's website and distributed by OFCO. Thank you for reviewing this report and I welcome your comments and feedback.

Sincerely,

Patrick

Patrick Dowd, JD Director Ombuds Washington State Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds 6840 Fort Dent Way, Suite 125 Tukwila, WA 98188 206-439-3870



Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds

An Independent Voice for Families and Children

2016 Annual Report

Patrick Dowd, *Director* ofco.wa.gov



STATE OF WASHINGTON OFFICE OF THE FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OMBUDS

6840 FORT DENT WAY, SUITE 125 TUKWILA, WA 98188

(206) 439-3870 • (800) 571-7321 • FAX (206) 439-3877

January 2017

To the Residents of Washington State:

I am pleased to submit the 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds. This report provides an account of OFCO's activities from September 1, 2015 to August 31, 2016. OFCO thanks the parents, youth, relatives, foster parents, professionals and others who brought their concerns to our attention. We take their trust in our office most seriously.

During this reporting period, OFCO received 778 complaints in 2016, the most OFCO has ever received in a single year, and completed 727 complaint investigations regarding 1,121 children and 681 families. As in past years, the separation and reunification of families and the safety of children living at home or in substitute care were by far the most frequently identified issues in complaints.

In addition to complaint investigations, OFCO monitors practices and procedures within the child welfare system and makes recommendations to better serve children and families. Systemic issues discussed in this report include:

- Shortage of foster care placements and the use of hotels as emergency placements for children in state care;
- Child fatalities related to opioid use;
- Improving outcomes for children in group care; and
- Engaging incarcerated parents of children in state care.

Finally, in response to Governor Inslee's Executive Order, the Washington State Blue Ribbon Commission on the Delivery of Services to Children and Families released its report and recommendations to realign Children's Administration, Juvenile Rehabilitation and the Office of Juvenile Justice with the Department of Early Learning and establish the Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF). The intent of these recommendations reaches far beyond simply reorganizing existing state agencies that serve children and families. Rather the DCYF would promote greater accountability, heighten the visibility of children's issues, and reduce barriers to improving service and outcomes for children and families.

On behalf of all of us at the Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds, I want to thank you for your interest in our work. I am grateful for the leadership and dedication of those working to improve the welfare of children and families and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the residents of Washington State.

Sincerely,

Patrick Dowd, JD Director Ombuds

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The OFFICE OF THE FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OMBUDS (OFCO) was established by the 1996 Legislature to ensure that government agencies respond appropriately to children in need of state protection, children residing in state care, and children and families under state supervision due to allegations or findings of child abuse or neglect. The office also promotes public awareness about the child protection and welfare system, and recommends and facilitates broad-based systemic improvements.

This report provides an account of OFCO's complaint investigation activities from September 1, 2015, through August 31, 2016. This report also provides recommendations to improve the quality of state services for children and families.

CORE DUTIES

The following duties and responsibilities of the Ombuds are set forth in state laws:1

Respond to Inquiries:

Provide information on the rights and responsibilities of individuals receiving family and children's services, and on the procedures for accessing these services.

Complaint Investigation and Intervention:

Investigate, upon the Ombuds' own initiative or receipt of a complaint, an administrative act alleged to be contrary to law, rule, or policy, imposed without an adequate statement of reason, or based on irrelevant, immaterial, or erroneous grounds. The Ombuds also has the discretion to decline to investigate any complaint.

System Oversight and Improvement:

- Monitor the procedures as established, implemented, and practiced by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to carry out its responsibilities in delivering family and children's services to preserve families when appropriate and ensure children's health and safety;
- Review periodically the facilities and procedures of state institutions serving children, and statelicensed facilities or residences;
- Review child fatalities and near fatalities when the injury or death is suspected to be caused by child abuse or neglect and the family was involved with the Department during the previous 12 months;
- Recommend changes in law, policy and practice to improve state services for families and children; and
- Review notifications from DSHS regarding a third founded report of child abuse or neglect, within a twelve month period, involving the same child or family.

-

¹ RCW 43.06A and RCW 26.44.030.

Annual Reports:

- Submit an annual report to the Legislative Children's Oversight committee and to the Governor analyzing the work of the office including recommendations; and
- Issue an annual report to the Legislature on the implementation status of child fatality review recommendations.

INQUIRIES AND COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS

Between September 1, 2015 and August 31, 2016, OFCO completed 727 complaint investigations regarding 1,121 children and 681 families. As in previous years, issues involving the separation and reunification of families were by far the most frequently identified complaint issues. The conduct of CA staff and other agency services comprised the next-highest categories of issues identified in complaints.

OMBUDS IN ACTION

OFCO takes action when necessary to avert or correct a harmful action or oversight, or an avoidable mistake by Children's Administration (CA). Forty-eight complaints prompted intervention by OFCO in 2016. OFCO provided substantial assistance to resolve either the complaint issue or a concern identified by OFCO in the course of its investigation, in an additional 46 complaints.

In 2016, OFCO made 42 formal adverse findings against CA. OFCO provides CA with written notice of adverse findings resulting from a complaint investigation. CA is invited to respond to the finding, and may present additional information and request a revision of the finding. This process provides transparency for OFCO's work as well as accountability for DSHS.²

WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Shortage of Foster Care Placements

Washington has experienced a decline in the number of licensed foster homes since 2012,³ yet the number of children requiring out-of-home care has increased.⁴ As a result of limited placement resources, children in state care have been placed in hotels or Department offices, waiting for the Department to find them an appropriate placement. This report describes 883 "placement exceptions" involving 221 children. OFCO found that this is primarily a regional concern, occurring most frequently in Snohomish and King Counties. The ongoing practice of placing children in hotels indicates a shortage of foster homes and therapeutic placements.

This report discusses recommendations for addressing this placement shortage, including:

- Provide an adequate supply and range of residential placement options to meet the needs of all children in state care; and
- Expand programs that support foster and kinship families and prevent placement disruptions.

² An inter-agency agreement between OFCO and CA was established in November 2009.

³ Children's Administration, Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement, Monthly Metric Trends.

Partners for Our Children Data Portal Team. (2017). [Graph representation of Washington state child welfare data 1/6/2017]. Children in Out-of-Home Care (Count). Retrieved from http://www.vis.pocdata.org/graphs/ooh-counts.

Engaging Incarcerated Parents of Children in State Care

State laws and Department policies protect the interests of incarcerated parents whose children are in state care. Yet several complaints to OFCO about incarcerated parents indicate that these laws and policies are not being consistently followed. OFCO's investigations also identified challenges that caseworkers face in engaging with incarcerated parents. This report discusses three key recommendations for working with incarcerated parents of children in care.

- Incarcerated parents should receive heightened focus throughout the child welfare case process;
- CA and the Department of Corrections (DOC) should adopt policies and practices regarding and promoting communication with incarcerated parents; and
- Create an adequate array of services within DOC for incarcerated parents.

Child Fatalities Related to Opioid Use

In April 2016 OFCO published a report of its administrative reviews of child fatalities and near fatalities occurring in calendar year 2015. This report described the increase in abuse of opioids and its impact on the child welfare system. Key recommendations from the Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities in Washington State report are highlighted in OFCO's 2015-2016 Annual Report and include:

- Expand services for expectant mothers and mothers of newborns, such as the Nurse-Family
 Partnership a program that partners new and expectant mothers with a registered nurse who
 makes home visits; and
- Provide DCFS caseworkers with additional training and support resources for addressing substance abuse by parents, and assessing child safety.

Improving Outcomes for Children in Group Care

In 2016 OFCO visited nine Washington facilities licensed as group homes that provide services through a Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) contract. OFCO sought to learn from youth residing in these BRS-contracted group homes about their experiences in order to inform stakeholders about what is working and what needs improvement in group care. OFCO made several recommendations for improving group care, with select recommendations discussed in this Annual Report as well.

- Increase caseworker contact with youth placed in group homes;
- **Expand alternative placement options** so that more options are available to meet the needs of children with challenges in non-congregate settings though state care;
- **Enhance court oversight of children in group care**. Court review hearings should be held every three months for children placed in group care facilities; and
- Appoint attorneys for children residing in group care.

Meeting the Needs of LGBTQ+ Children and Youth

OFCO's report on Washington's group care identified specific issues and concerns facing LGBTQ+ children. These issues are not confined solely to children in group homes. Our entire child welfare system must ensure safe and supportive care and appropriate services for LGBTQ+ children throughout the child welfare system.

THE ROLE OF OFCO

The Washington State Legislature created the Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds⁵ (OFCO) in 1996 in response to two high profile incidents that indicated a need for oversight of the child welfare system.⁶ OFCO provides citizens an avenue to obtain an independent and impartial review of Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) decisions. OFCO is also empowered to intervene to induce DSHS to change problematic decisions that are in violation of the law or that have placed a child or family at risk of harm, and to recommend system-wide improvements to the Legislature and the Governor.

- Independence. One of OFCO's most important features is independence. OFCO's ability to
 review and analyze complaints in an independent manner allows the office to maintain its
 reputation for integrity and objectivity. Although OFCO is organizationally located within the
 Office of the Governor, it conducts its operations independently of the Governor's Office in
 Olympia. OFCO is a separate agency from DSHS.
- Impartiality. The Ombuds acts as a neutral investigator and not as an advocate for individuals
 who file complaints, or for the government agencies investigated. This neutrality reinforces
 OFCO's credibility.
- Confidentiality. OFCO must maintain the confidentiality of complainants and information obtained during investigations. This protection makes citizens, including DSHS professionals, more likely to contact OFCO and speak candidly about their concerns.
- Credible review process. OFCO has a credible review process that promotes respect and
 confidence in OFCO's oversight of DSHS. Ombuds are qualified to analyze issues and conduct
 investigations into matters of child welfare law, administration, policy, and practice. OFCO's
 staff has a wealth of collective experience and expertise in child welfare law, social work,
 mediation, and clinical practice and is trained in the United States Ombudsman Association
 Governmental Ombudsman Standards. OFCO and DSHS operate under an inter-agency
 agreement that guides communication between the two agencies and promotes accountability.⁷

AUTHORITY

Under chapter RCW 43.06A, the Legislature enhanced OFCO's investigative powers by providing it with broad access to confidential DSHS records and the agency's computerized case-management system. It also authorizes OFCO to receive confidential information from other agencies and service providers,

⁵ State law requires that all statutes must be written in gender-neutral terms unless a specification of gender is intended. Pursuant to Chapter 23 Laws of 2013, the term "ombudsman" was replaced by "ombuds". http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2013-14/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5077-S.SL.pdf.

⁶ The death of three year old Lauria Grace, who was killed by her mother while under the supervision of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), and the discovery of years of sexual abuse between youths at the DSHS-licensed OK Boys Ranch. The establishment of the office also coincided with growing concerns about DSHS' role and practices in the Wenatchee child sexual abuse investigations.

⁷ The inter-agency agreement is available online at http://ofco.wa.gov/documents/interagency_ofco_dshs.pdf.

including mental health professionals, guardians ad litem, and assistant attorneys general.⁸ OFCO operates under a shield law which protects the confidentiality of OFCO's investigative records and the identities of individuals who contact the office. This encourages individuals to come forward with information and concerns without fear of possible retaliation. Additional duties have been assigned to OFCO by the Legislature over the years regarding the reporting and review of child fatalities, near fatalities, and cases of children experiencing recurrent maltreatment.⁹

OFCO derives influence from its close proximity to the Governor and the Legislature. The Director is appointed by and reports directly to the Governor. The appointment is subject to confirmation by the Washington State Senate. The Director-Ombuds serves a three-year term and continues to serve in this role until a successor is appointed. OFCO's budget, general operations, and system improvement recommendations are reviewed by the Legislative Children's Oversight Committee.

WORK ACTIVITIES

OFCO performs its statutory duties through its work in four areas, currently conducted by 6.8 full time employees:

- Listening to Families and Citizens. Individuals who contact OFCO with an inquiry or complaint often feel that DSHS or another agency is not listening to their concerns. By listening carefully, the Ombuds can effectively assess and respond to individual concerns as well as identify recurring problems faced by families and children throughout the system.
- Responding to Complaints. The Ombuds impartially investigates and analyzes complaints
 against DSHS and other agencies. OFCO spends more time on this activity than any other. This
 enables OFCO to intervene on citizens' behalf when necessary, and accurately identify
 problematic policy and practice issues that warrant further examination. Impartial
 investigations also enable OFCO to support actions of the agency when it is unfairly criticized for
 properly carrying out its duties.
- Taking Action on Behalf of Children and Families. The Ombuds intervenes when necessary to avert or correct a harmful oversight or mistake by DSHS or another agency. Typical interventions include: prompting the agency to take a closer look at a concern, facilitating information sharing, mediating professional disagreements, and sharing OFCO's investigative findings and analyses with the agency to correct a problematic decision. These interventions are often successful in resolving legitimate concerns.
- Improving the System. Through complaint investigations and reviews of critical incidents (including child fatalities, near fatalities, and cases of children experiencing recurrent maltreatment), OFCO works to identify and investigate system-wide problems, and publishes its findings and recommendations in public reports to the Governor and the Legislature. This is an effective tool for educating state policymakers and agency officials about the need to create, change, or set aside laws, policies or agency practices so that children are better protected and cared for and families are better served by the child welfare system.

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⁸ See also RCW 13.50.100(6).

⁹ See RCW 74.13.640(1) (b); 74.13.640(2); and 26.44.030(15).

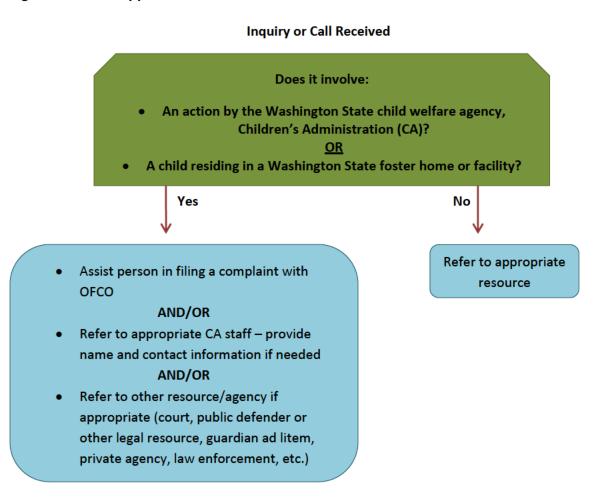
I. LISTENING TO FAMILIES AND CITIZENS

- Inquiries and Complaints
- Complaint Profiles
- Complaint Issues

INQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS

The Ombuds listens to people who contact the office with questions or concerns about services provided through the child welfare system. Callers may include family members of children receiving such services, professionals working with families and children, or concerned citizens. By listening carefully, the Ombuds identifies what the caller needs and responds effectively. Callers may simply need information about Children's Administration's process and/or services, or they may want to know how to file a complaint. While OFCO's online complaint submission process (launched April 2014) has greatly expedited filing a complaint, OFCO still provides live telephonic assistance to complainants who want help with the process. For example, they may want verification about whether OFCO can investigate their concern, or guidance in framing or identifying their complaint issue. Callers whom OFCO cannot help directly are referred to the right place for information or support. OFCO makes every effort to have each incoming call answered by a live person rather than a voicemail or menu of options. We frequently hear from callers that this individualized service is highly valued.

Figure 1: What Happens When a Person Contacts OFCO?



COMPLAINT PROFILES

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

This section describes complaints filed during OFCO's 2016 reporting year — September 1, 2015 to August 31, 2016. **OFCO received 778 complaints in 2016**, the most OFCO has ever received in a single year. Figure 3 shows that 80 percent of complaints are submitted electronically, with less than 9 percent submitted through the mail and 7 percent taken over the phone.

Figure 2: Complaints Received¹⁰

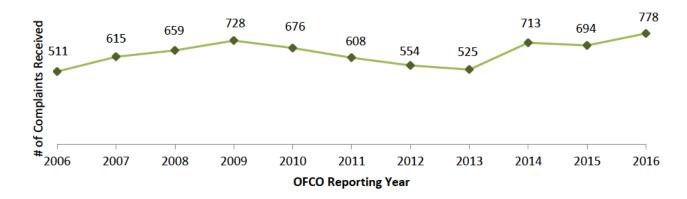
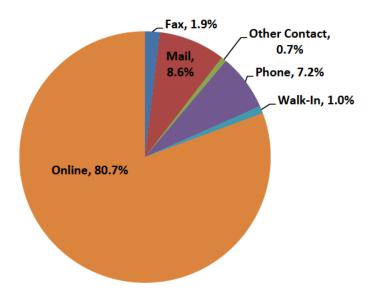


Figure 3: How Complaints Were Received, 2016



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 $^{^{10}}$ The number of complaints directed at each DSHS region and office is provided in Appendix A.

PERSONS WHO COMPLAINED

Parents, grandparents, and other relatives of the child whose family is involved with Children's Administration (CA) have historically filed around three-quarters of complaints investigated by OFCO, and 2016 was no exception. As in previous years, few children contacted OFCO on their own behalf.

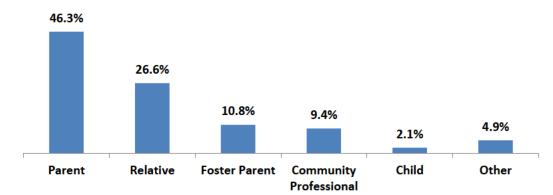


Figure 4: Complainant Relationship to Children, 2016

OFCO's complaint form asks complainants to identify their race and ethnicity for the purposes of ensuring that the office is hearing from all Washington citizens.

Table 1: Complainant Race and Ethnicity, 2016

	OFCO Complainants 2016	WA State Population*
Caucasian	69.2%	78.2%
African American	7.6%	3.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3.2%	1.4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.9%	8.1%
Other	1.2%	3.8%
Multiracial	6.2%	4.9%
Declined to Answer	11.8%	-
Latino / Hispanic	6.2%	11.7%
Non-Hispanic	93.8%	88.3%

^{*}U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

CHILDREN IDENTIFIED IN COMPLAINTS

Nearly 40 percent of the 1,121 children identified in complaints were four years of age or younger. Another 30 percent were between ages five and nine. OFCO receives fewer complaints involving older children, with the number of complaints decreasing as the child's age increases. This closely mirrors the ages of children in out of home care through the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS).¹¹

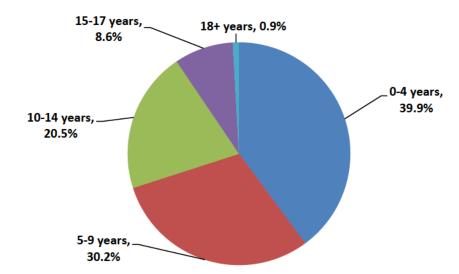


Figure 5: Age of Children in Complaints, 2016

Table 2 shows the race and ethnicity (as reported by the complainant) of the children identified in complaints, compared with children in placement through CA and the general state population.

Table 2: Race and Ethnicity of Children Identified in Complaints, 2016

	Children in Out of		
	OFCO Children 2016	Home Care*	WA State Children**
Caucasian	64.0%	66.9%	70.7%
African American	9.0%	9.0%	3.8%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4.0%	6.2%	1.7%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.1%	1.5%	7.6%
Other	1.0%	0.1%	5.1%
Multiracial	16.3%	15.2%	11.1%
Declined to Answer	4.5%	-	-
Latino / Hispanic	13.0%	18.5%	20.5%
Non-Hispanic	87.0%	81.5%	79.5%

^{*}Data reported by Partners for Our Children (partnersforourchildren.org, 2015)

^{**}U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

 $^{^{11}}$ For more information on the ages of children in out of home care, see Appendix B.

COMPLAINT ISSUES

Concerns identified in complaints to OFCO, while varying somewhat year-to-year, have remained largely consistent over time, as displayed below in Figure 6. Complaints can often be complex and complainants will identify multiple issues or concerns they would like investigated.

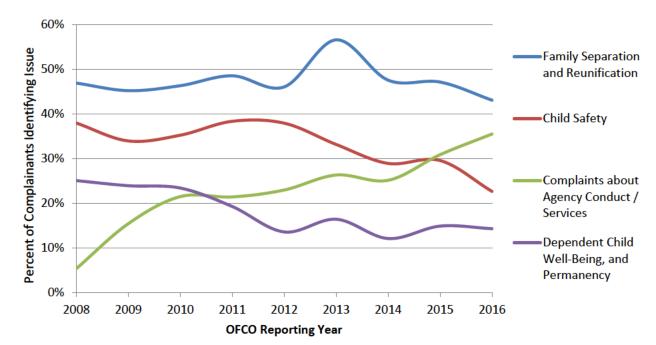


Figure 6: Categories of Issues Identified by Complainants

Family Separation and Reunification

As in previous years, issues involving the separation and reunification of families (raised 335 times in complaints) were the most frequently identified. Just over 40 percent (43.1 percent) of complaints expressed a concern about separating families and/or not reunifying with parents or other relatives. This category of complaints incorporates a broad spectrum of issues affecting family stability. Specific concerns include:

- Children being removed from their parents (identified in 100 complaints) or other relatives (13 complaints);
- Not placing children with relatives (44 complaints) or with siblings (9 complaints);
- Failure to ensure appropriate visitation or contact between children and their parents, siblings, or relatives (78);
- Delays in or failures to reunite family (42); and
- Termination of parental rights (6).

Conduct of CA Staff and Agency Services

Issues involving the conduct of CA staff and other agency services were the next-most identified concern in complaints. The number of complainants expressing these kinds of concerns has steadily been increasing since 2010, with a particularly sharp increase since 2014. Complaints about agency conduct or services incorporate a broad category including:

- Concerns about unprofessional conduct by agency staff (102 complaints) such as harassment, retaliation, discrimination, bias, breaches of confidentiality, or a conflict of interest;
- Communication failures (55), such as caseworkers not communicating with parents or other relatives;
- Unreasonable findings of abuse or neglect by CPS (21);
- Unwarranted or unreasonable CPS investigations (86); and
- Inaccurate agency records (13).

Child Safety

Nearly half of the **176** child safety complaints focused on concerns that the agency was failing to protect children from abuse or neglect while in their parents' care (79 complaints or 45 percent of all child safety complaints). Another 30 percent concerned safety risks to dependent children in foster or relative care (53). Twenty-one complainants were concerned about the safety of children being returned to their parents' care.

Child Well-Being and Permanency

Complaints involving the well-being and permanency of children in foster or other out-of-home care increased this year (111 complaints), although this category of complaints continues to be identified at much lower rates than in the late 2000s. This category includes inappropriate placement changes for dependent children, as well as placement instability such as multiple moves in foster care or abrupt placement changes (raised in 33 complaints). Twelve complaints raised concerns about a child's permanency plan, including delays in permanency. The agency's failure to provide adequate services to a dependent child was a concern in 29 complaints this year.

Table 3 on the following page shows the number of times specific issues within these categories were identified in complaints.

Table 3: Issues Identified by Complainants

	2016	2015	2014
Family Separation and Reunification	335	327	339
Unnecessary removal of child from parental care	100	89	80
Failure to reunite family	42	73	83
Failure to place child with relative	44	51	71
Failure to provide appropriate contact between child and parent / other			
family members (excluding siblings)	78	49	52
Other inappropriate placement of child	34	23	20
Unnecessary removal of child from relative placement	13	22	11
Failure to provide sibling visits and contact	3	7	4
Failure to place child with siblings	9	5	3
Inappropriate termination of parental rights	6	5	11
Concerns regarding voluntary placement and/or service agreements	3	0	4

	2016	2015	2014
Complaints About Agency Conduct	276	214	179
Unprofessional conduct, harassment, retaliation, conflict of interest or			
bias/discrimination by agency staff	86	71	29
Unwarranted/unreasonable CPS investigation	86	43	38
Communication failures	55	43	44
Unreasonable CPS findings	21	23	28
Breach of confidentiality by agency	16	19	21
Inaccurate agency records	8	13	9
Heavy-handedness, unreasonable demands on family by agency staff	0	0	3
Poor case management, high caseworker turnover, other poor service	4	1	2
Lack of coordination between DSHS Divisions	2	1	2

	2016	2015	2014
Child Safety	176	205	206
Failure to protect children from parental abuse or neglect	79	100	122
Abuse	41	53	62
Neglect	37	44	56
Failure to address safety concerns involving children in foster care or other non-institutional care	53	54	41
Failure to address safety concerns involving child being returned to parental care	21	31	29
Child with no parent willing/capable of providing care	10	11	2
Child safety during visits with parents	11	5	10
Failure by agency to conduct 30 day health and safety visits with child	3	3	2

	2016	2015	2014
Dependent Child Well-Being and Permanency	111	103	86
Unnecessary/inappropriate change of child's placement, inadequate			
transition to new placement	33	39	19
Failure to provide child with adequate medical, mental health, educational			
or other services	29	32	28
Inappropriate permanency plan/other permanency issues	13	14	12
ICPC issues (placement of children out-of-state)	8	5	5
Failure to provide appropriate adoption support services / other adoption			
issues	10	5	11
Unreasonable delay in achieving permanency	12	3	5
Placement instability/multiple moves in foster care	0	2	3
Extended foster care; independent living service issues	0	2	1
Inadequate services to dependent / non-dependent children in institutions			
and facilities	4	0	2

	2016	2015	2014
Other Complaint Issues	114	112	102
Violation of parent's rights	34	23	15
Failure to provide parent with services / other parent issues	38	47	35
Children's legal issues	3	5	11
Lack of support / services to foster parent / other foster parent issues	15	7	15
Foster parent retaliation	4	1	1
Foster care licensing	13	13	8
Lack of support / services and other issues related to relative / suitable			
other / fictive kin caregiver	7	15	9
Retaliation against relative caregiver	0	0	0
Violations of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	0	1	8

II. TAKING ACTION ON BEHALF OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Investigating Complaints
- OFCO's Adverse Findings
- Complaint Summaries

INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

OFCO's goal in a complaint investigation is to determine whether DSHS Children's Administration or another state agency violated law, policy, or procedure, or unreasonably exercised its authority. OFCO then assesses whether the agency should be induced to change its decision or course of action.

OFCO acts as an impartial fact finder and not as an advocate. Once OFCO establishes that an alleged agency action (or inaction) is within OFCO's jurisdiction, and that the allegations appear to be true, the Ombuds analyzes whether the issues raised in the complaint meet at least one of two objective criteria:

- 1. The action violates law, policy, or procedure, or is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.
- 2. The action was harmful to a child's safety, well-being, or right to a permanent family; or harmful to the preservation or well-being of a family.

If so, OFCO may respond in various ways, such as:

- Where OFCO finds that the agency is properly carrying out its duties, the Ombuds explains to the complainant why the complaint allegation does not meet the above criteria, and helps complainants better understand the role and responsibilities of child welfare agencies.
- Where OFCO makes an adverse finding regarding either the complaint issue or another
 problematic issue identified during the course of the investigation, the Ombuds may work to
 change a decision or course of action by CA or another agency.
- In some instances, even though OFCO has concluded that the agency is acting within its
 discretion, the complaint still identifies legitimate concerns. In these cases the Ombuds
 provides assistance to help resolve the concerns.

OFCO completed **727** complaint investigations in 2016.¹² These investigations involved **1,121** children and more than **681** families. As in previous years, the majority of investigations were standard non-emergent investigations (90.2 percent). Only about one out of every 10 investigations (9.8 percent) met OFCO's criteria for initiating an emergent investigation, i.e. when the allegations in the complaint involve either a child's immediate safety or an urgent situation where timely intervention by OFCO could significantly alleviate a child or family's distress. Once a complaint is determined to be emergent, OFCO begins the investigation immediately.

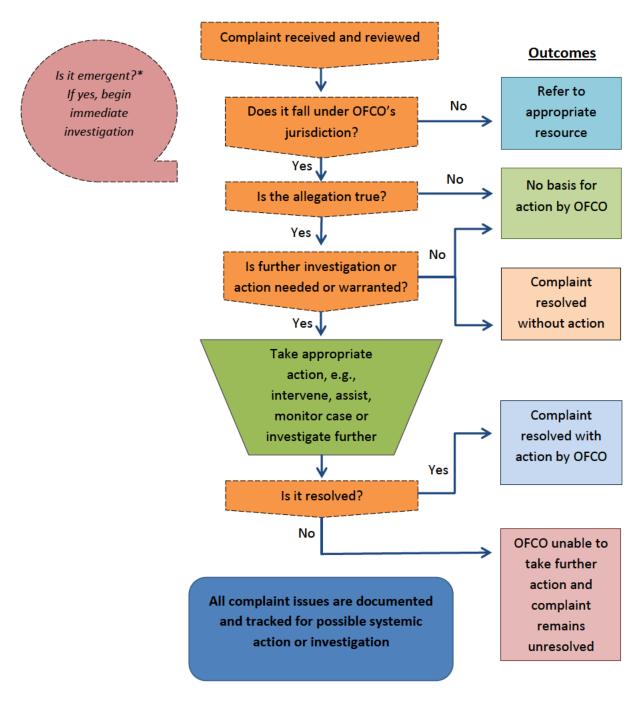
Over the years, OFCO consistently intervenes in emergent complaints at a higher rate than nonemergent complaints. In 2016 OFCO intervened or provided timely assistance to resolve concerns in 18.3 percent of emergent complaints, compared with 12.2 percent of non-emergent complaints.

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¹² Some complaints received during the reporting year remain open for ongoing investigation, whereas some investigations opened during the 2014-2015 OFCO reporting year were completed during the 2015-2016 reporting year.

Figure 7: How Does OFCO Investigate Complaints?

Process



^{*}Emergent complaints are those in which the allegations involve either a child's immediate safety or an urgent situation where timely intervention by OFCO could significantly alleviate a child's or family's distress.

INVESTIGATION OUTCOMES

Complaint investigations result in one of the following actions:

• OFCO Intervention:

- OFCO substantiated the complaint issue and intervened to correct a violation of law or policy, or to prevent harm to a child/family; OR
- OFCO identified an agency error or other problematic issue, sometimes unrelated to the complaint issue, during the course of its investigation, and intervened to address these concerns.
- OFCO Assistance: The complaint was substantiated, but OFCO did not find a clear violation or unreasonable action. OFCO provided substantial assistance to the complainant, the agency, or both, to resolve the complaint.
- OFCO Monitor: The complaint issue may or may not have been substantiated, but OFCO monitored the case closely for a period of time to ensure any issues were resolved. While monitoring, the Ombuds may have had repeated contact with the complainant, the agency, or both. The Ombuds also may have offered suggestions or informal recommendations to agency staff to facilitate a resolution. These complaints are closed when there is either no basis for further action by OFCO or the identified concerns have been resolved.

In most cases, the above actions result in the identified concern being resolved. A small number of complaints remain unresolved.

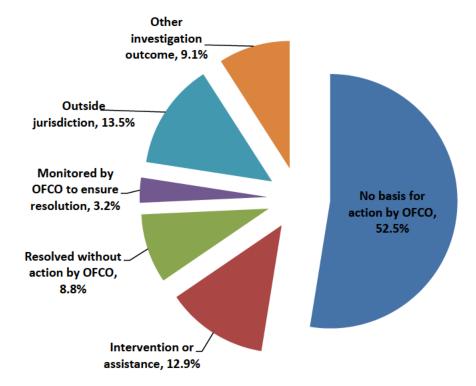
 Resolved without action by OFCO: The complaint issue may or may not have been substantiated, but was resolved by the complainant, the agency, or some other avenue. In the process, the Ombuds may have offered suggestions, referred complainants to community resources, made informal recommendations to agency staff, or provided other helpful information to the complainant.

No basis for action by OFCO:

- The complaint issue was unsubstantiated and OFCO found no agency errors in reviewing the case. OFCO explained why and helped the complainant better understand the role and responsibilities of the child welfare agency; OR
- The complaint was substantiated and OFCO made a finding that the agency violated law or policy or acted unreasonably, but there was no opportunity for OFCO to intervene (e.g. complaint involved a past action, or the agency had already taken appropriate action to resolve the complaint).
- **Outside jurisdiction:** The complaint involved agencies or actions outside of OFCO's jurisdiction. Where possible, OFCO refers complainants to another resource that may be able to assist them.
- Other investigation outcomes: The complaint was withdrawn, became moot, or further investigation or action by OFCO was unfeasible for other reasons (e.g. nature of complaint requires an internal personnel investigation by the agency which is beyond OFCO's authority).

Investigation results have remained fairly consistent in recent years. OFCO assisted or intervened to try to resolve the issue in nearly 13 percent of complaints in 2016—this represents 94 complaints. Interventions or assistance by OFCO almost always result in the substantiated issues in the complaint being resolved – in 2016, 94.7 percent of these complaints were resolved. Twenty-three complaints (3.2 percent) required careful monitoring by OFCO for a period of time until either the identified concerns were resolved, or OFCO determined that there was no basis for further action. OFCO found no basis for any action after investigating in just above half of complaints this year (52.5 percent), a substantially smaller amount than in 2015 (66.7 percent).

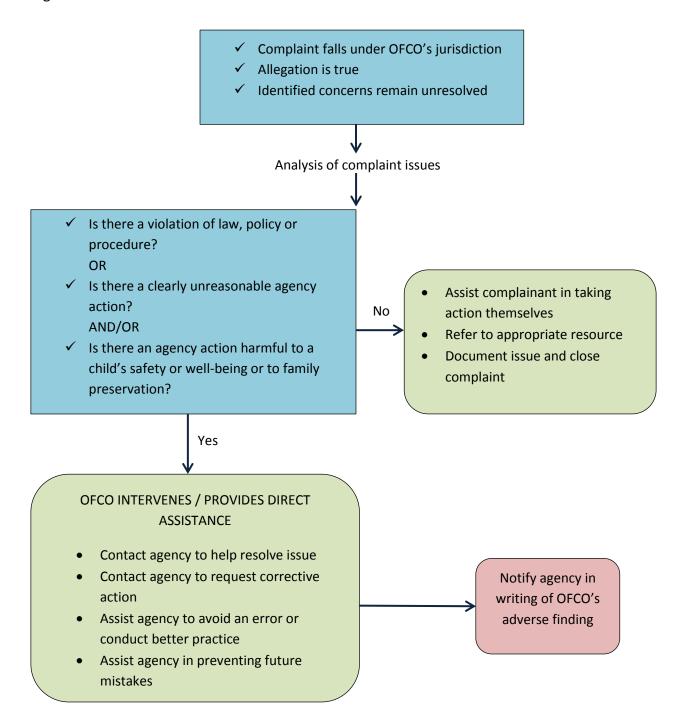




OFCO IN ACTION

OFCO takes action when necessary to avert or correct a harmful oversight or avoidable mistake by the DSHS Children's Administration or another agency. The below chart shows when OFCO takes action on a case and what form that may take.

Figure 9: When Does OFCO Take Action?



OFCO's ADVERSE FINDINGS

After investigating a complaint, if OFCO has substantiated a significant complaint issue, or has discovered its own substantive concerns based on its review of the child welfare case, OFCO may make a formal finding against the agency. In many cases, the adverse finding involves a past action or inaction, leaving OFCO with no opportunity to intervene. In situations in which OFCO believes that the agency's action or inaction could cause foreseeable harm to a child or family, however, the Ombuds intervenes to persuade the agency to correct the problem. In such instances, the Ombuds quickly contacts a supervisor to share the finding, and may recommend a different course of action, or request a review of the case by higher level decision makers.

Adverse findings against the agency fall into two categories:

- the agency violated a law, policy, or procedure;
- the agency's action or inaction was clearly unreasonable under the circumstances; and the agency's conduct resulted in actual or potential harm to a child or family.

In 2016, OFCO made **42** adverse findings in a total of 30 complaint investigations. Some complaint investigations resulted in more than one adverse finding, related to either separate complaint issues or other issues in the case that were identified by OFCO during the course of its investigation. Pursuant to an inter-agency agreement between OFCO and DSHS, ¹³ OFCO provides written notice to the Children's Administration of any adverse finding(s) made on a complaint investigation. The agency is invited to formally respond to the finding, and may present additional information and request a modification of the finding. CA requested a modification of the finding in 19 cases. OFCO modified its finding in one case.

Table 4 shows the various categories of issues in which adverse findings were made. The number of adverse findings against the agency increased slightly in 2016 (a total of 42 findings) from 2015 (a total of 33 findings). Similar to last year, findings related to the safety of children (14 findings), as well as findings involving violations of parents' rights or services to parents (12 findings), were by far the two most common issues resulting in adverse findings.

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¹³ Available at ofco.wa.gov/documents/interagency ofco dshs.pdf.

ADVERSE FINDINGS BY DSHS REGION

The number of complaint investigations resulting in adverse findings by OFCO varied across each of the three DSHS Regions. Of the 42 adverse findings OFCO made against the agency in 2016, over half (54.8%) were in Region 2, the most populous of the three regions. The number of adverse findings in Region 1 totaled eleven (26.2 percent) and in Region 3 totaled eight (19 percent). Bearing in mind that with such small numbers, it is statistically not meaningful to draw conclusions about increases or decreases in different regions, we nevertheless show OFCO's findings for the past three years by region, for stakeholders who are interested in tracking these numbers. These numbers are broken down by office in Table 12 shown in Appendix C.

Figure 10: Number of Adverse Findings in Complaint Investigations, by DSHS Region

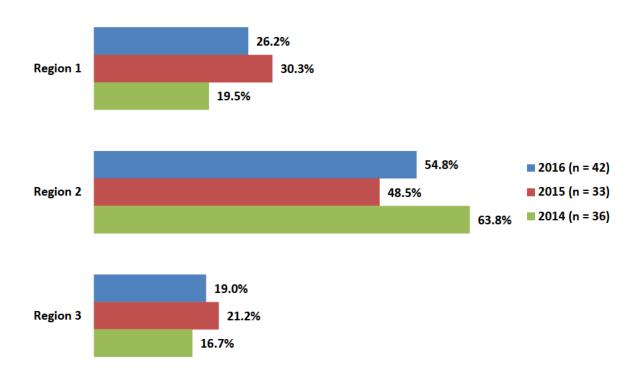


Table 4: Adverse Findings by Issue

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Child Safety	10	12	14	17
Failure by DCFS to ensure/monitor child's safety:				
Failure to conduct required monthly health and safety visits			6	4
Unsafe placement of dependent child	1	5	2	5
Other failures to ensure/monitor child safety	2	3	1	2
Inadequate CPS investigation or case management	4	2	1	2
Inappropriate CPS finding (unfounded)		1	1	
Delay in notifying law enforcement of CPS report		1	1	1
Failure to complete safety assessment	1		1	3
Other child safety findings	3		1	
Family Separation and Reunification	5	4	2	2
Failure to place child with relative	3	3	1	2
Failure to make reasonable efforts to reunify family			1	
Other findings related to family separation/reunification	2	1		
Dependent Child Well-being and Permanency	10	1	2	0
Unnecessary/multiple moves	1		2	
Other findings related to dependent child well-being/permanency	9	1		
Parent's Rights	9	13	12	10
Failures of notification/consent, public disclosure, or breach of	4	3	6	1
confidentiality				
Delay in completing CPS investigation or internal review of findings	5	7	3	5
Failure to communicate with or provide services to parent		1	1	2
Other violations of parents' rights		2	2	2
Poor Casework Practice Resulting in Harm to Child or Family	12	1	2	10
Poor communication among CA divisions (CPS, CFWS, DLR)			2	5
Other poor practice	12	1	2	5
Foster Parent/Relative Caregiver Issues	1	2		2
Other Findings	2	3	1	1
Failure to provide meaningful assistance and services to adoptive family			1	
Failure to protect referent's confidentiality				1
Number of findings	49	36	33	42
Number of closed complaints with one or more finding	34	29	24	31

Adverse findings involving child safety accounted for 40 percent of findings, with unsafe placement of a dependent child and failures to complete required monthly health and safety visits being the most common findings related to child safety. Nearly one-quarter (23.8 percent) of overall findings involved parent's rights, with delays in completing CPS investigations and internal reviews of founded findings representing half of the findings in this category.

There were substantially more findings in 2016 relating to poor casework practice that resulted in harm to children and families than in 2015. Half of these findings were the result of poor communication between divisions in CA. OFCO made no findings related to dependent children's well-being and permanency in 2016.

SELECT COMPLAINT SUMMARIES

<u>An Incarcerated New Mother Had Never Spoken With Her Assigned</u> <u>Caseworker</u>

An incarcerated mother gave birth in July 2015. The Department filed for dependency and placed the child in foster care. A new caseworker was assigned to the case in August of that year. OFCO received a complaint in March 2016 stating that the mother had not been contacted by her caseworker. When contacted by OFCO, the worker confirmed she had never spoken with the mother and had never attempted to contact the mother's correctional counselor in the facility. She knew nothing about the mother's engagement with services or placement preferences for her child. OFCO requested that the worker complete these tasks, as required by law and policy. Following OFCO's contact the worker spoke with the mother's counselor, and then with the mother. The mother also was able to participate by phone in a permanency planning meeting for her child, and provide her preferences on the child's placement. OFCO made a finding that DCFS failed to communicate with the mother, impacting the mother's engagement with services and the child's permanency.

OFCO Helps a Family With Limited English Proficiency Receive Information in a Language They Understand

A Spanish speaking parent was the subject of a CPS referral. The investigating worker went to the family home and discovered that the parents spoke Spanish, and did not have proficiency in English. Rather than ceasing the contact until she could return with an interpreter, the worker completed the interviews using an adult child of the parents as an interpreter. In all future contacts the investigating worker properly used an interpreter. However, upon completion of the investigation the worker's supervisor did not notice that the family was of limited English proficiency and sent a letter informing them the case was closing in English. The family complained to OFCO, which responded by contacting the supervisor and asking her to translate the letter and resend it to the family as soon as possible. She did so, and also assured OFCO she would remind the worker to use an interpreter in all contacts with families of limited English proficiency, including the first contact.

OFCO Helps a Teen Access Extended Foster Care

An eighteen year old former foster youth contacted OFCO because she wanted to reenroll in foster care through the Extended Foster Care program. While a minor, her DCFS worker told her she need only contact the office after she turned eighteen if she wanted to opt back in. By policy, however, she had only six months in which to make this change. Following her 18th birthday the young woman's housing circumstances had changed and she needed to move. She took the initiative to contact her former foster parent who said she was willing to welcome her back into her home so long as the young woman was enrolled in Extended Foster Care. The young woman agreed and called her former caseworker to request reentry, leaving a voicemail indicating that she wanted to enroll in Extended Foster Care. The young woman left multiple voicemails for the worker over the next several days and never heard back. Worried about the looming deadline, she contacted OFCO. OFCO responded by reaching out to the former caseworker. When the worker did not respond to OFCO's calls either, OFCO contacted the worker's supervisor. The supervisor said that she would personally ensure that someone would contact the young woman and enroll her in the program. Within a few weeks the young woman was signed up for the program and living with her former foster mom.

An Incarcerated Parent Has Ongoing Difficulties Communicating With DCFS

OFCO received a complaint in 2015 from the incarcerated parent of two dependent children that his assigned caseworker had never visited him, never called him, and had not responded to his numerous letters. OFCO made a finding based on this lack of communication and its impact on permanency for the children. Shortly thereafter, the father filed another complaint with OFCO. He had been assigned a new worker, and was once again incarcerated. The new worker discovered the father was incarcerated in July of 2015, and made no attempts to contact him while assigned to the case. Yet another worker was assigned to the father's case in November 2015. That worker left DCFS in early 2016. The first documented contact with the father in over six months occurred in mid-January 2016, when the father was released from custody and the caseworker's supervisor took over the case. During both periods of incarceration the father was not being provided visits with his children. OFCO made another finding based on lack of communication with this incarcerated parent, and the impact it had on permanency for the children. Since the father has been out of custody the Department has maintained communication with him for the first time. The children remain dependent, in out of home care.

OFCO Finds Current DCFS Involvement Inadequate to Protect a Child

OFCO reviews all DCFS cases where there have been three founded findings of child maltreatment against a subject, or a child has been the named victim in three founded findings, within the last year. In one such case OFCO found that an eight year old child reported to her teacher that a relative in the home was regularly threatening physical harm against her with a weapon. Law enforcement arrested the relative and he spent several days in police custody. CPS interviewed the mother who said she did not believe that the relative was threatening the child. Soon after, the child disclosed that another adult in the home sexually abused her. That relative was subsequently arrested as well. The mother did not express concern with this abuse either. The Department held a family meeting regarding the various allegations and developed a safety plan that required the mother to ensure there was no inappropriate contact between the child and the identified family members. She also agreed to participate in voluntary services.

OFCO was concerned that the parent who did not believe the child and failed to protect her in the past was responsible for enforcing the safety plan. OFCO contacted the voluntary services supervisor who also expressed concern for the mother's ability to protect the child. OFCO learned that the Department would hold an internal staffing regarding transferring the case back to CPS for further investigation, and would also speak with their Assistant Attorney General (AAG) about the possibility of filing a dependency petition. However, when the Department did not document any further action on this case OFCO contacted the Area Administrator. He did not feel that the Department could meet the requirements of a dependency petition and said that they were considering speaking with the non-custodial parent about seeking placement of the child. OFCO monitored these efforts over the next several weeks but saw little progress. OFCO eventually learned that CPS was unable to locate the non-custodial parent and had then staffed the case with their AAG. The AAG determined it was appropriate to file a dependency petition and obtained a court order to remove the child.

The voluntary services supervisor thanked OFCO for holding DCFS accountable for the well-being of this child. OFCO made an adverse finding based on failure to follow agency procedure and establishing a safety plan with a non-protective parent as its enforcer. DCFS did not request a modification of this finding.

DCFS Fails to Conduct a Thorough Relative Search, and Siblings Are Not Placed Together

OFCO received a complaint from the adoptive parents of a six year old formerly dependent child. The family was frustrated that DCFS was not placing their child's biological half sibling in their home. They said that DCFS was aware they were interested in taking placement of any of their child's siblings. The child's sibling had previously come into DCFS care and the family declined placement at that time because it appeared she would be returning to the mother. A few months later the child once again came into DCFS custody. This time, despite changed circumstances rendering the child unlikely to return to the mother again, DCFS did not contact this family for placement of the child. She entered foster care instead. Six months later, the family found out about the sibling being back in care. They immediately contacted the Department, and were told there would be an updated investigation into the family's ability to adopt. This update was completed over the next several months and concluded that the family was appropriate to adopt. DCFS then convened an adoption panel to decide if the child should remain with the foster family she had, by then, been living with for nearly a year, or if she should move into the home of her half sibling. The panel decided that the child should remain with the foster family due to the length of time she had lived there and her bond with the family. The adoptive parents of the half sibling were concerned that by not contacting them when the sister returned to care, DCFS had not followed protocol. Further, based on comments made during the decision making process, they had concerns that some of those involved in the decision were potentially motivated by anti-Semitic or homophobic sentiment.

OFCO contacted DCFS and asked whether or not the adoptive parents were contacted when the sibling came back into care, per policy. The worker acknowledged that they were not. He said he had not known that the child had a sibling in the care of this family until the family contacted DCFS. The adoptive parents ultimately petitioned the court to allow them to intervene in the dependency and request placement of the child. The court denied the petition. OFCO decided not to make a finding based on failure to place with the biological sibling despite policy directing DCFS to do so, based on the child's time in her foster home and bonding with that family. However, OFCO did make a finding that DCFS failed to complete an adequate relative search when the sibling came back into care; OFCO determined that had the relative search occurred in a timely fashion there was a strong likelihood that the sibling would have gone to the home of her brother.

Disclosure of Confidential Information Results in Harassment

OFCO received a complaint that DCFS improperly revealed the identity of a confidential referrer to the person accused of neglect of a child. The referrer was subjected to ongoing harassment by the person and ultimately had to leave her job and change her phone number. Relying on documents provided by the complainant OFCO made a finding that DCFS improperly disclosed the identity of the referrer. DCFS requested that the finding be overturned, as the subject of the complaint made a records request once the case was closed. DCFS surmised that the subject was able to determine the referrer's identity from the context of the complaint, not because the referrer's identity was improperly disclosed. OFCO responded that the complainant asserted the harassment started even before the case was closed. DCFS then requested the date that the subject sent the first harassing messages to check against the date of the records disclosure. With permission from the complainant OFCO provided this information. DCFS checked the date of the records release and found that the harassment pre-dated it by several months. Because the subject had information that he could only know if given access to the referral, months before proper records were released to him, DCFS accepted OFCO's finding of improper disclosure of confidential information.

A Caseworker and Group Home are Unable to Prevent Child from Repeatedly Running from Placement

A community provider working with a thirteen year old youth contacted OFCO with concerns regarding his placement. The youth was living in a large group home following two failed preadoptive placements. Before this placement, he was reportedly struggling with depression and challenging behaviors. Upon moving to this group home the youth started running from placement. His runs quickly increased in frequency until he was running away from placement almost every day. While on the run he started getting into fights and was injured. He began experimenting with drugs. He also engaged in a variety of low level property crimes and quickly developed a criminal history. Based on the frequency of runs and the youth's behavior, the provider felt that the current placement was not truly meeting the needs of the youth. As Washington does not allow lockdown facilities to house youth the only question before OFCO was whether or not this facility was an appropriate placement, not whether or not it should have been physically preventing the child from running. OFCO learned that the child had been legally free for several years. DCFS had previously identified potential adoptive homes, but each time the youth rejected adoption. He also received multiple diagnoses related to his mental health. His DCFS caseworker pursued a Behavioral Rehabilitative Services (BRS) designation for him so that he could access treatment and placements designed to meet his high level of needs. At the time of the complaint he was placed in a BRS facility, though his frequent running was an impediment to services and treatment.

OFCO contacted the child's assigned worker, who shared OFCO's concerns with the youth's behaviors. He stated that the problem was that the child appeared to need a more restrictive placement but was in the most restrictive kind of placement allowed in the State. He could not identify anything the group home could do differently to prevent the child from running, particularly when the child was not present enough to engage in treatment. However, he noted the child had a relative who had just made herself available for placement. The caseworker said the child's best option was to stabilize in his current placement enough that he could move in with the relative. OFCO monitored this complaint briefly but was unable to take action on the concerns named in the complaint. The facility was unable to physically stop the child from running and he was not engaging in the treatment that might address this behavior. DCFS was not violating law, policy, or procedure, or acting clearly unreasonably.

A Foster Home Requires a Teen to Leave by 6AM and not Return until 7PM

A seventeen year old dependent youth suffered from serious mental health issues including suicidal ideation and attempts. She was hospitalized on several occasions for this behavior. When DCFS filed a dependency petition she was initially placed in a foster home but was then hospitalized following another episode of suicidal ideation. When she was released from the hospital she was placed back in that foster home but shortly thereafter the foster parents asked DCFS to move her. She was then temporarily placed at a crisis residential center, and was then once again hospitalized for self-harming behavior. Upon her release DCFS struggled to find a placement for her. The Department eventually made an agreement with a foster parent who required this youth to be picked up from the home every day at 6:00 AM, and be dropped off again no earlier than 7:00 PM. They did not require this schedule of the other children placed in their home. By the time OFCO contacted the caseworker the child was in a new placement. OFCO concluded that a placement with this schedule restriction was not appropriate for any child, let alone a child struggling with mental health issues and suicidality. The caseworker shared OFCO's concerns. She said that the placement unit approved the home because it was better than staying in a hotel with two awake caseworkers, which was the only other option available. She said the child was only in this home briefly, but it was still concerning. A licensing investigation into this issue determined that it did not constitute a violation of the foster license, as the foster home had specifically made an agreement with DCFS to have this schedule for the child.

A Lack of Resources and Distance Hinder Communication Between an Incarcerated Parent and DCFS

OFCO received a complaint from an incarcerated mother of a two year old dependent child that her caseworker had not contacted her, and she was not receiving court ordered services to remedy her parental deficiencies. OFCO found that the recently assigned worker had visited the mother only once, and sent her two letters. OFCO encouraged the worker to visit the mother again, as policy mandates monthly visits. OFCO also found that the mother was not offered services while she was incarcerated in a county jail. OFCO closed this complaint after receiving information that the worker was planning to visit the mother. The mother filed another complaint shortly thereafter. The caseworker had visited her once, and then again lapsed into a period of non-communication. The mother was unable to receive calls from the worker due to her incarceration, and the worker was unable to accept collect calls from the mother through the DCFS phone system. OFCO once again contacted DCFS and asked them to follow policy and visit the mother monthly. DCFS responded that monthly visits were not feasible due to the mother's incarceration on the other side of the state; and the caseloads and resources of the office did not allow for in person contact. The supervisor noted that they were facilitating in person and video visits between the mother and child, however, and sending the mother monthly letters. OFCO closed the complaint without findings. The mother was unsatisfied with this outcome, and extremely frustrated that she was not receiving more and better contact from her caseworker. She told OFCO she felt like no one was helping her get her child back.

III. IMPROVING THE SYSTEM

- Shortage of Foster Care Placements
 - Hotels Used as Emergent Placements for Foster Children
- Engaging Incarcerated Parents of Children in State Care
- Child Fatalities Related to Opioid Use
- Improving Outcomes for Children in Group Care
- Meeting the Needs of LGBTQ+ Children and Youth
- Executive Order 16-03: Realign State Programs Serving Children and Families

SHORTAGE OF FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS

HOTELS USED AS EMERGENT PLACEMENTS FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

While Department policy specifically prohibits placement of a child at a DSHS office or in an "institution not set up to receive foster children", a Regional Administrator may approve a "placement exception" at a DSHS office, apartment, or hotel if no appropriate licensed foster home or relative caregiver is available, and as long as the child is adequately supervised.

For the past two years, OFCO has been tracking the use of placement exceptions, specifically the use of hotels and Department offices, as emergency placements for children. From September 1, 2015 to August 31, 2016, OFCO received notice of 883 placement exceptions involving 221 different children. This is a dramatic increase from the year before where OFCO documented 120 placement exceptions involving 72 children. The vast majority of these placement exceptions (870) involved children spending the night in hotels/offices. There were thirteen known instances of children spending the night in DCFS offices.

For most hotel/office stays, at least two awake DCFS workers supervised the children overnight, and often times a security guard was also present. These stays followed unsuccessful attempts to locate an available relative caregiver or licensed foster home equipped to meet the child's needs. Some children had behavioral histories arising at group care facilities where they had previously stayed, such as fire setting or assaulting staff members, and therefore could not be placed at the same or other facilities. In several instances the children did not have extreme behaviors or therapeutic needs, but DCFS could not find any other placement options in time. Many of these children were also served by other state systems such as juvenile rehabilitation or mental health treatment facilities. In some cases children were taken into custody or disrupted from placement late in the evening, making the placement search even more difficult.

Examples of hotels being used for temporary placements include:

- ❖ A 15 year old youth came into DCFS care following allegations of physical and sexual abuse in the home. Since entering care the child was placed in a series of night-to-night placements and short-term group care facilities. Due to the child's behaviors, several group care facilities refused placement. Some nights DCFS identified a placement for the evening and the child would refuse to go, requiring placement in a hotel. The youth has a history of alcohol use, running from placements, property destruction, and assaultive behaviors. This child spent a collective 31 nights in hotels and as of this writing, resides in an out of state group home.
- ❖ A 17 year old dependent youth was placed in a BRS therapeutic foster placement but required a new placement when the family decided to stop providing this level of care. The child has a

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¹⁴ OFCO receives notification of placement exceptions and other critical incidents through CA's Administrative Incident Reporting System (AIRS).

history of suicidal ideations, threats of physical aggression towards peers and staff, and substance abuse. DCFS was unable to identify an ongoing placement so the child experienced different placements nightly, including 12 nights spent in hotels. Eventually a placement was secured at a BRS group home, but the child frequently ran from this facility. After two months on the run the child was picked up by law enforcement and brought back into care. DCFS was unable to find placement through a statewide search and the child was again placed in a hotel. The child spent a total of 27 non-consecutive nights in a hotel. The child has since turned 18 and exited state care.

- ❖ A four year old dependent child stayed in a hotel with two awake social workers. This child has disrupted from previous placements, struggles with calming himself, and has behavioral concerns that make him difficult to place. All available foster homes with openings declined to take him and a night in a hotel was required.
- ❖ A 17 year old dependent youth required an emergent placement after being abruptly discharged from a Crisis Residential Center for acting violently towards staff and property. DCFS was unable to immediately place this youth due to his long history of very challenging mental health needs. The child spent 10 nights in hotels during the review period and is now enrolled in extended foster care, and is attending a university.

Spending the night in a hotel or office, even just once, can be traumatizing for children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, and is burdensome for Department staff. When a placement cannot be found children are often repeatedly handed from one caseworker to another as shifts change or caseworkers must tend to other responsibilities. Children often spend all day in a DCFS office before going to a hotel late in the evening, and are then taken back to the office or to school early the next morning. Placement exceptions and related instability put children at risk. In one example, two youth who had spent several nights in hotels gained access to restricted areas of a DCFS office and stole items, vandalized the office space, and became physically assaultive towards staff. In another instance a youth threatened to beat up two younger children who were also spending the evening in the hotel. Another youth displayed a knife and threatened the after-hours staff and a child. This youth was later taken to the hospital for a psychiatric evaluation.

PLACEMENT EXCEPTIONS DATA

The number of placement exceptions varied extensively month to month, as shown in Figure 11. June 2016 saw the most placement exceptions by far with 211. Many children spent only one night in a hotel before a more suitable placement could be identified (99 children, or 44.8 percent). Just over ten percent of children involved in placement exceptions spent a total of ten or more nights in a hotel or DCFS office. The most nights any individual child spent in a hotel or office was 34. Figure 4 provides a further breakdown of the number of placement exceptions per child. The average number of placement exceptions per child who spent at least one night in a hotel or DCFS office was four.

Figure 11: Placement Exceptions by Month

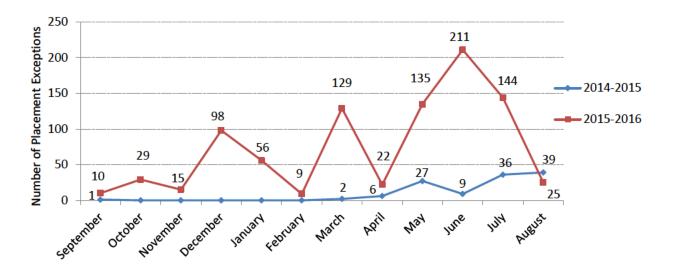


Table 5: Number of Placement Exceptions per Child, 2015-2016

Children with Number of Placement Exceptions	# of Children (n=221)	% of Children
Only 1 placement exception	99	44.8%
2 to 5	73	33.0%
6 to 9	25	11.3%
10 to 20	18	8.1%
21 or more	6	2.7%

OFCO reviewed the 883 placement exceptions reported by CA from September 1, 2015 to August 31, 2016, and our analysis of this data reveals that this is primarily a regional concern, that most of the children involved in placement exceptions have significant mental health and/or behavioral needs, and that a startling number of kids being placed in hotels were under the age of ten.

A Regional Concern

This placement crisis is most apparent in DSHS Region 2. Nearly 99 percent (98.9%) of nights spent in a hotel during the 2015-2016 OFCO reporting year were spent by children with cases assigned to a DCFS office in Region 2. Although children from King County make up 17 percent of children in out of home care in Washington, they were involved in 65 percent of the placement exceptions. ¹⁵ Children with cases in Snohomish County represent 9.7 percent of children in out of home care, but were involved in 25.7 percent of placement exceptions. Together, cases from these two counties account for 90.6 percent of overnight hotel/office stays.

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¹⁵ Partners for Our Children Data Portal Team. (2016). [Graph representation of Washington state child welfare data 10/13/2016]. Children in Out-of-Home Care (Count). Retrieved from http://www.vis.pocdata.org/graphs/ooh-counts.

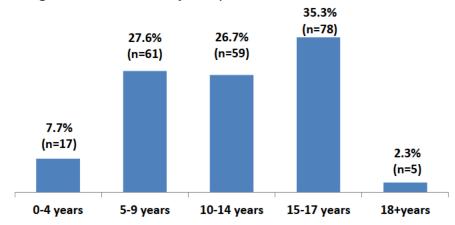
Table 6: Placement Exceptions by County, 2015-2016

County	# of Placement Exceptions	% of All Placement Exceptions	# of Children in Out of Home Care ¹⁶	% of All Children in Out of Home Care
King (Region 2)	573	64.9%	1460	17.0%
Snohomish (Region 2)	227	25.7%	833	9.7%
Whatcom (Region 2)	44	5.0%	221	2.6%
Skagit (Region 2)	23	2.6%	140	1.6%
Clark (Region 3)	7	0.8%	480	5.6%
Island (Region 2)	6	0.7%	57	0.7%
Thurston (Region 3)	2	0.2%	362	4.2%
Pierce (Region 3)	1	0.1%	1333	15.6%

Demographics of Children Experiencing Placement Exceptions

Of the 221 children OFCO identified who spent at least one night in a hotel or DCFS office, 60.2 percent were male and 39.8 percent were female.¹⁷ Figure 12 shows that most of the children were at least ten years of age (64.3 percent). Over one-third (35.3 percent) were nine years or younger, with 17 children under the age of four requiring placement in a hotel. Younger children tended to average fewer nights in hotels/offices; the average number of nights spent in placement exceptions for these children ages four and younger was 1.3. Two children who experienced placement exceptions were under the age of two. Both of these children required immediate placement after being taken into protective custody by law enforcement, and both only stayed one night in either a hotel or DCFS office before a more suitable placement was identified. Children ages 15-17 averaged the most nights in hotels (5.8). Five children were over the age of 18 and were participating in the extended foster care program. The average number of placement exceptions by age is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 12: Child Age in Placement Exceptions, 2015-2016¹⁸



¹⁶ Data from Partners for Our Children. Total number of children in out of home care on January 1, 2016 was 8569.

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¹⁷ Several children experienced multiple hotel stays during the review period. There were 221 children involved in 883 placement exceptions.

18 One child's age was not identified

Figure 13: Average Number of Placement Exceptions of Children Who Experienced at Least One Placement Exception by Age, 2015-2016

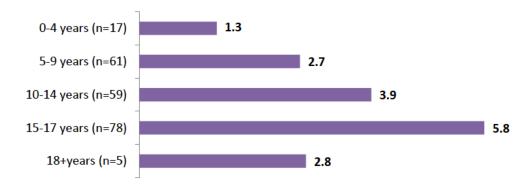


Table 7: Child Race and Ethnicity

Nearly 20 percent of children spending a night in a hotel or office were Black/African American. Caucasian children were slightly underrepresented, while American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander and Hispanic children required hotel placement at levels consistent with the out of home care population.

	Placement Exception	Entire Out of Home Care	Region 2 Out of Home Care
	Population	Population*	Population**
Caucasian	52.0%	66.1%	58.6%
African American	19.9%	8.7%	13.4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5.0%	5.7%	6.7%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3.2%	1.2%	3.8%
Multiracial	16.7%	16.8%	16.65
Unknown/Other	3.2%	0.05%	0%
Latino / Hispanic	17.6%	19.6%	17.4%

^{*}Data reported by Partners for Our Children. Number of children in care on January 1, 2016 (partnersforourchildren.org, 2016). Retrieved October 17, 2016.

Children with Significant Mental Health and Behavior Rehabilitation Needs are at Risk of Placement Exceptions

Many of the children experiencing placement exceptions have significant treatment and placement needs which pose barriers to locating and maintaining an appropriate placement. Foster families, relatives or group homes may not feel equipped to look after children with significant needs. The children temporarily placed in hotels often shared several characteristics, including:

- Significant mental health needs (42.5% of children involved in placement exceptions)
- Physically aggressive or assaultive behaviors (38.5%)
- History of running from placements (24%)
- Past attempts or threats of suicide (20.4%)

^{**}Region 2 encompasses King, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, Island, and San Juan counties.

- Substance abuse struggles (18.1%)
- Sexually aggressive behaviors (15.8%)
- Developmental disabilities (12.2%).

OFCO also noted a number of children without any identified significant behavior or mental health needs who nonetheless required temporary placement in a hotel or a DCFS office when no placement could be identified.

The ongoing practice of placing children in hotels and state offices indicates a shortage of foster homes and therapeutic placements in Washington State. The foster families that remain may not feel equipped to look after children with significant mental health or behavioral concerns. Unless required by contract, a foster parent or licensed facility may decline to accept or keep a child in their care for these reasons.¹⁹ The inadequate number of homes, and ability of remaining homes to opt out of accepting children with significant challenges, makes placing children with mental health or behavioral needs especially difficult.

To Enhance Placement Stability and Reduce the Use of Placement Exceptions, OFCO Recommends:

Provide an adequate supply and range of residential placement options to meet the needs of all children in State care

Children's Administration recently contracted with private agencies to provide an additional 20 receiving care beds located in King and Snohomish Counties to address the need for emergency placements and to avoid placement exceptions. Since the opening of these short term receiving beds the number of placement exceptions has dramatically decreased. However, DSHS must develop a continuum of placement options, including more BRS group care and therapeutic foster homes, to meet the long term needs of children in state care. The ongoing use of hotels as placement resources for children is not acceptable.

Expand Programs that Support Foster and Kinship Families and Prevent Placement Disruptions

Programs Supporting Caregivers

Supporting caregivers and children can improve caregiver retention, prevent placement disruption, and avoid emergency placement in hotels or office buildings. One example of creative efforts to try to improve placement stability and support caregivers is The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM).²⁰ MFM is a foster care delivery program designed to improve the safety, well-being, and permanency of children and youth in foster care. The MFM consists of a constellation of six to ten foster, and/or kinship families with a central "Hub Home" which provides support, including: assistance with systems navigation; peer support for children and caregivers; social activities; and planned and emergent respite care. Fourteen Mockingbird constellations are established in Washington State, some funded privately and others by

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¹⁹ WAC 388-148-1395.

²⁰ Mockingbird Family Model 2009 MANAGEMENT REPORT ON PROGRAM OUTCOMES, October 2010. At: http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org/images/stories/docs/MFM/2009_mgmt_report_final_fullreport.pdf.

the state. In 2016, the Legislature directed The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to evaluate the impact and cost effectiveness of the Mockingbird Family Model.²¹ Stakeholders and policymakers should continue to explore ways to support caregivers and expand programs shown to improve caregiver retention, child safety, permanency and placement stability.

Enhance Respite Care for Foster Parents and Relative Caregivers

Respite care services provide temporary relief from the demands of parenting responsibilities and can be crucial in preventing placement disruption and reducing the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Retention respite provides licensed foster parents with regular "time off" from the demands of caregiving responsibilities and can also be used to meet any emergent needs of licensed caregivers. Retention respite is earned by eligible licensed caregivers at a rate of two days per month. Foster parents may accumulate up to 14 days of respite care to be used at one time. CA pays the cost of retention respite for foster families licensed through the State. Additionally, foster parents may arrange for unpaid exchange respite with other licensed foster parents.²² Too often however, caregivers report that they are unable to access respite care when needed. Factors contributing to this include a paucity of approved respite providers, and also that overworked and overwhelmed caseworkers do not have the time to identify and facilitate respite stays.

The Department should facilitate respite care for foster parents and address respite care needs in the child's case planning. Key elements of the respite care case plan should provide that:

- Respite care is available in emergent situations as well as pre-scheduled events. The case plan should identify respite care arrangements before a crisis occurs;
- The child knows and is comfortable with the person providing respite care; and
- Whenever possible, respite care should occur in the foster parent's and child's own home.

Recruit, Train and Compensate "Professional Therapeutic Foster Parents"

Policymakers should explore recruiting, training and compensating a select group of therapeutic foster parents, to devote their full time and attention to the care of high needs children and youth with mental health conditions and or challenging behaviors. These foster parents would be required to complete additional training and be expected to take on greater responsibilities in caring for these children. This would provide a family like placement for these children, decrease the need for congregate care, and increase placement stability.²³

While foster parents receive maintenance payments to help meet the needs of the foster children in their care, these payments are not intended to cover the full cost of caring for a child or to compensate the foster parents for their time or efforts. These maintenance payments are determined through use of the Foster Care Rate Reimbursement schedule. Foster parents are also required to have a sufficient outside source of income to support themselves without relying on foster care payments, and, as a result, one or both foster parents are often employed outside the home.

The Foster Care Rate Reimbursement schedule has four levels. These levels are based on the age of the child; the behavioral, emotional, physical and mental health needs of the child; and the foster parents'

²¹ An interim report is due to the legislature January 15, 2017, and a final report is due June 30, 2017. http://wsipp.wa.gov/CurrentProjectsPdf/1.

²² CA Practices and Procedures Guide, Section 4510.

²³ The Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Crisis, (August 2016) Dee Wilson. http://www.uwcita.org/the-foster-care-recruitment-and-retention-crisis/.

ability to meet those needs. A basic rate payment (Level 1) is paid to all foster parents for costs related to food, clothing, shelter, and personal incidentals. In addition, there are three levels of supplemental payments (Levels 2, 3 and 4) which are paid to foster parents who care for children with varying degrees of physical, mental, behavioral or emotional conditions that require increased effort, care or supervision that are above the needs of a typically developing child.

Table 8: Foster Care Rate Reimbursement²⁴

AGE OF CHILD	BASIC	LEVEL II (includes Basic Rate)	LEVEL III (includes Basic Rate)	LEVEL IV (includes Basic Rate)
0 to 5 years	\$562.00	\$739.92	\$1,085.51	\$1,364.30
6 to 11 Years	\$683.00	\$860.92	\$1,206.51	\$1,485.30
12 & Older	\$703.00	\$880.92	\$1,226.51	\$1,505.30

Many of the children who experience placement exceptions have significant mental health needs and/or challenging behavioral issues which exceed existing resources within our foster care system. Even with the current tiered levels of maintenance payments, foster parents are not fully compensated for the cost of providing for these children or for the work involved in meeting their needs.

²⁴ Becoming a Foster Parent. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Found at: https://www.dshs.wa.gov/CA/fos/becoming-a-foster-parent.

ENGAGING INCARCERATED PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN STATE CARE

State laws and Department policies protect the interests of incarcerated parents whose children are in state care. For example, case plans must: enable an incarcerated parent to participate in case conferences and shared planning meetings, include consideration of available treatment within the correctional facility, and provide for parent-child visits.²⁵

Complaints to OFCO about incarcerated parents indicate that these laws and policies are not consistently followed. OFCO complaint investigations found that caseworkers had not:

- Communicated regularly with incarcerated parents, or had sent only a perfunctory letter to the parent, or had only communicated with the DOC counselor and not the parent;
- Provided parent-child visits;
- · Involved the parent in case planning; and/or
- Coordinated available services or treatment for the parent.

These complaint investigations also identified challenges that case workers face in engaging incarcerated parents such as: difficulties receiving collect phone calls from a parent or directly calling a parent; difficulty arranging visits or meeting with a parent who is at a correctional facility outside of their region; and only limited remedial services made available to the parent within the correctional facility.

<u>Recommendation</u>: Incarcerated parents should receive heightened focus throughout the child welfare case process

Caseworkers, as well as other professionals such as attorneys, CASA/GALs, and the court, should each take steps to ensure incarcerated parents are engaged in the child's case. Involving these parents is not solely a question of protecting the parent's rights but it also impacts placement decisions, reunification efforts, and permanency and stability for the child. For example, at monthly case reviews, DCFS supervisors should assure that: the interests of incarcerated parents are being met; court ordered visits and services are provided; and that the parent is included in case planning. Other parties, and ultimately the court, should monitor compliance with court orders pertaining to incarcerated parents. Incarcerated parents should be able to participate in court hearings and case planning meetings by teleconference or videoconference.

<u>Recommendation</u>: CA and DOC should adopt policies and practices regarding and promoting communication with incarcerated parents

An incarcerated parent's ability to communicate with their caseworker is limited. An inmate can (to a limited degree) initiate, but cannot directly receive calls. As a result, in some cases, caseworkers rely solely on sending letters providing general information to the parent, or they contact the parent's DOC counselor, but do not speak directly with the parent.

²⁵ RCW 13.34.136; RCW 74.04.800; CA Practices and Procedures Guide 43091; CA Practices and Procedures Guide 4254; and CA Practices and Procedures Guide 1710.

Instead, CA policy should require direct communication each month between the case worker and the parent. The case worker should contact the DOC counselor to schedule a date and time for either a special visit or phone call with the parent. Additionally, the case worker should work with the DOC counselor to schedule the parent's participation in court hearings or case planning meetings by teleconference. CA and DOC should establish an interagency agreement to work together on behalf of incarcerated parents with children in state care.

Recommendation: Create an adequate array of services within DOC for incarcerated parents Like other parents involved in the child welfare system, incarcerated parents often require a variety of services in order to reunite with their children. Court ordered services frequently include substance abuse evaluation and treatment, mental health counseling, domestic violence treatment, and/or parenting education. Complaints to OFCO demonstrate that obtaining services while incarcerated is often difficult. Administrators and policymakers should ensure that treatment resources within DOC are sufficient to allow parents to engage in court ordered remedial services. This would entail an expansion of available services in correctional facilities, and the development of a method of communication between the correctional facility service providers and the caseworkers.

CHILD FATALITIES RELATED TO OPIOID USE

OFCO's 2016 Report on Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities in Washington described the increase in abuse of opioids and its impact on the child welfare system. Washington crime lab data for police evidence testing indicate that there has been an 85 percent increase in statewide opioid use from 2002-2004 to 2011-2013. In Washington, prenatal exposure to opioids increased from 11.5 percent of all drug-exposed neonates in 2000 to 24.4 percent in 2008. Additionally, 41.7 percent of infants diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome were exclusively exposed to opioids. One recent study found that opioid use appears to blunt a person's natural parenting instincts and may affect the bonds a parent feels for a child.

From calendar year 2012 to 2015, OFCO identified 32 maltreatment-related fatalities of children ages 0 to 3 years where a caregiver's opioid use was a known risk factor. Some examples include:

- A one-month old infant died when the mother fell asleep while breastfeeding and the child aspirated. The mother was involved with methadone maintenance treatment at the time of death.
- A one-month old infant died while co-sleeping with the mother on a couch. The child spent time in the NICU after birth for methadone withdrawal.
- A three-month old infant died while co-sleeping with the mother. Both the mother and the infant tested positive at delivery for opiates.
- A three-year old child died after ingesting the mother's methadone.
- An eighteen-month old child died after being left alone in a car for several hours. The mother
 had a known history of using opiates and morphine. The child's three-year-old sibling tested
 positive for both these drugs immediately after the fatality.

OFCO Recommendations

Recommendation: Expand services for expectant mothers and mothers of newborns

Additional programs are needed to assist vulnerable mothers and those who may be struggling with substance abuse. For example, the Nurse-Family Partnership® (NFP) is a community health program that works with mothers pregnant with their first child. Each mother served by NFP is partnered with a registered nurse early in her pregnancy and receives ongoing nurse home visits that continue through her child's second birthday. NFP improves family outcomes including: increased time between births and fewer children; more stable parent partner relationships; less engagement in risky behaviors, less

²⁶ Full report available at: http://ofco.wa.gov/reports/.

²⁷ Opioid Trends across Washington State. April 2015. University of Washington Alcohol & Drug Abuse Institute. http://adai.uw.edu/pubs/infobriefs/ADAI-IB-2015-01.pdf.

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome refers to a constellation of behaviors and symptoms in newborns exposed in utero to addictive illegal or prescription drugs.

²⁹ Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome: How States Can Help Advance the Knowledge Base for Primary Prevention and Best Practices of Care, (2014) http://www.astho.org/prevention/nas-neonatal-abstinence-report/.

Opioids May Interfere with Parenting Instincts, Study Finds, NYTimes, DelaCruz, Donna, Oct. 13.2016. <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/well/family/opioids-may-interfere-with-parenting-instincts-study-finds.html?hpw&rref=health&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=well-region®ion=bottom-well&WT.nav=bottom-well& r=0.

substance abuse during pregnancy and reduced role impairment; mothers are less reliant on public assistance; children are less likely to be maltreated or abused; and the program leads to reductions in emergency room visits, hospital stays and childhood mortality.³¹

<u>Recommendation</u>: Provide DCFS caseworkers with additional training and support resources addressing substance abuse by parents, and assessing child safety.

Child fatality and near fatality review recommendations have previously identified the need for additional caseworker training on issues related to parental chemical dependency, and in particular, opiate use and methadone treatment, and assessing child safety when this issue is present.³² Prior recommendations have also identified the need for a chemical dependency professional to provide DCFS caseworkers with case consultation, guidance for client engagement, and information on community resources. The Department should continue efforts to provide ongoing training to caseworkers and assure that professional case consultation regarding substance abuse is available, either located in the DCFS office, or through community partners.

³¹ Olds DL, Kitzman H, Hanks C, et al. *Effects of nurse home visiting on maternal and child functioning: Age-9 follow-up of a randomized trial*. <u>Pediatrics</u>. 2007;120(4):e832-45; Olds DL, Kitzman HJ, Cole RE, et al. *Enduring effects of prenatal and infancy. home visiting by nurses on maternal life course and government spending: Follow-up of a randomized trial among children at age 12 years*. <u>Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine</u>. 2010;164(5):419-24; Small SA, Reynolds AJ, O'Connor C, Cooney SM. *What works, Wisconsin: What science tells us about cost-effective programs for juvenile delinquency prevention: A report to the Wisconsin governor's juvenile commission and the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison; 2005; and Karoly LA, Kilburn MR, Cannon JS. *Early childhood interventions: Proven results, future promise*. Santa

Monica: RAND Corporation; 2005: Monograph Report 341.

32 See Appendix C for the full text of these recommendations.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN GROUP CARE

In 2016, OFCO visited the nine group homes with BRS contracts located across Washington.³³ OFCO wanted to learn from youth residing in BRS-contracted group homes about their experiences in order to inform stakeholders about what is working and what needs improvement in group care. OFCO believes this will allow us to better serve our youth with the greatest service needs.

Each site visit included: a tour of the facility; a presentation about OFCO and how youth could access services; a confidential written survey about youths' experiences in group care; one-on-one youth interviews; and written surveys for staff. A few key recommendations discussed in OFCO's Group Care report include:

Recommendation: Increase caseworker contact with youth placed in group homes:

Youth were clear that more time and contact with their caseworker is a priority. When caseworkers have smaller caseloads and remain assigned to a family/child for an extended period of time, they have the capacity to develop and maintain relationships with youth. For youth in group care, who often have complex transition and treatment plans, continued and sustained interaction is even more important. The Department has made significant progress in providing mobile technology to caseworkers. These tools should be used to increase contact with children in group care through phone calls, correspondence and audio-video conferencing such as Skype or FaceTime. Specifically, assigned case workers should complete one additional contact per month with children who are placed in BRS group care. This could be accomplished through in person visits or by phone or video chat.

Recommendation: Expand alternative placement options:

Although high quality group care can be essential to ensure a child's safety and stabilization, youth, especially young children, are best served in family-like settings. In addition to improving the quality of care and life in existing group homes, our child welfare system must also explore and expand a continuum of non-congregate care placement options that can meet the needs of some of our state's must vulnerable and needy children. This should include additional BRS foster homes.

Recommendation: Enhance court oversight of children in group care

Courts play a powerful role in reviewing and assuring the appropriate use of group care in individual cases. When children are placed in group care facilities, court review hearings should be held every 3 months. Further, the children should be encouraged to attend, either in person or by phone.

Recommendation: Appoint attorneys for children residing in group care

Because the fundamental liberty interests and rights of children in group care are at greatest risk of infringement, state law should require that children placed in group care be represented by attorneys. An attorney can advocate for the child's stated interest and protect their rights.

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³³ Youth's Perspectives on Group Care: Outreach to Youth Living in Washington's Group Homes (2016). Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds. The full report and further recommendations are available at: http://ofco.wa.gov/reports/

MEETING THE NEEDS OF LGBTQ+ CHILDREN AND YOUTH

OFCO's Group Care Report identified specific issues and concerns facing LGBTQ+ children. These issues are not confined solely to children and youth in congregate care. Our child welfare system must ensure safe and supportive care and appropriate services for LGBTQ+ children throughout the child welfare system. Child welfare practice should: prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ+ youth and ensure these youth are respected; increase cultural competency among agency staff, foster parents, and service providers; provide child welfare services that address the specific needs of LGBTQ+ youth and their families: and effectively manage information on the sexual orientation and gender identity of youth in the child welfare system. A capture of this need and is presently creating a LGBTQ+ Program Manager position to develop policies and practice to support LGBTQ+ children and youth in state care.

As a framework for developing policies, the Department should consider recommended practices identified by the Child Welfare League of America³⁵ that:

Prohibit discrimination against and harassment of youth, staff and foster and adoptive families, ranging from physical violence to denial of services to the use of slurs, on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Ensure Safe and Supportive Foster, Group Care, and Adoptive Placements for LGBTQ+ Youth

- When seeking a foster or adoptive home placement for an LGBTQ+ young person, child welfare staff should ensure that the home is accepting of LGBTQ+ people.
- All foster and adoptive parents should receive training on caring for an LGBTQ+ young person, as any child may be LGBTQ+ yet not comfortable sharing that information with DCFS.
- Child welfare staff should not put LGBTQ+ youth into placements, services, schools or programs where they will be unsafe or unsupported.

Support Access to Appropriate Medical and Mental Health Care Services for LGBTQ+ Youth Child welfare agencies should ensure that health care providers who treat LGBTQ+ youth are trained and educated on the heightened risks these youth may face. Health care providers should be able to discuss sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual behaviors openly and comfortably.

Adopt Confidentiality Policies

Child welfare agencies should adopt strict policies for managing confidential information about a young person's sexual orientation and gender identity, in addition to other sensitive information. Child welfare

³⁴ LGBT Populations and the Child Welfare System: A Snapshot of the Knowledge Base and Research Needs, , 2015. Available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/chapter_brief_child_welfare_508_nologo.pdf.

³⁵ Recommended Practices To Promote the Safety and Well-Being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth and Youth at Risk of or Living with HIV in Child Welfare Settings, CWLA, 2012. Available at: https://www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/publications/downloads/recommended-practices-youth.pdf

staff should always respect and maintain a LGBTQ+ young person's privacy and never disclose confidential information about sexual orientation or gender identity without the child's permission.

Collect and Evaluate Data

State child welfare agencies should include participants' sexual orientation and gender identity status in demographic data elements and evaluation tools to determine accessibility and outcomes specific to LGBTQ+ youth.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 16-03: REALIGN STATE PROGRAMS SERVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

On February 18, 2016, Governor Jay Inslee established the Washington State Blue Ribbon Commission on the Delivery of Services to Children and Families to recommend a structure for a state department focused solely on improving services and outcomes for children, youth and families.³⁶ The Commission's report was released on November 8, 2016 with the unanimous recommendation to integrate Children's Administration, Juvenile Rehabilitation and the Office of Juvenile Justice with the Department of Early Learning and establishing Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF).³⁷ Key findings supporting the creation of DCYF and discussed in the Commission's report include:

- State services are not currently organized in a way that achieves the best outcomes for children, youth and families. There should be a single department whose mission is centered on child safety, early learning, and the social, emotional and physical well-being of children, youth and families supporting and strengthening families before crises occur.
- Parents and families who are facing challenges must be offered needed and appropriate services earlier to improve the healthy development of children and youth, protect them from harm, and disrupt multigenerational trauma.
- We should improve the effectiveness of how and when services are delivered, with a much greater focus on prevention and recognition of the importance of caregiving to healthy brain development.
- We should prioritize those children and youth most at risk of neglect, physical harm, sexual abuse and other adverse factors most often linked to low rates of kindergarten readiness, dropping out of school, substance abuse, incarceration, homelessness and other negative outcomes later in life.
- We should ensure focused attention on adolescents, with this new agency having primary responsibility for helping the state achieve better outcomes for youth.
- We should ensure that the programs and services are tightly aligned or integrated with essential services such as economic supports that address poverty, and access to behavioral health services.
- ➤ We should strengthen the linkages to K-12 schools to ensure that children and youth who are struggling or disengaged from school are identified early and that resources in the new

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³⁶ Executive Order 16-03.

³⁷ "Improving the Well-Being of Washington State's Youth, Children and Families", http://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/health-care-human-services/blue-ribbon-commission-children-and-families.

department, schools and communities are mobilized and coordinated to support students' continued progress toward graduation.

We should build on current strengths and successes of the Department of Early Learning (DEL).

As stated in the Executive Order, a separate Department of Children, Youth and Families "has the potential to promote greater accountability, heighten the visibility of children's issues, and reduce barriers to improving service and outcomes for children and families."

The recommendations of the commission also present an opportunity to redesign our child welfare system to: engage families proactively before child abuse or neglect occurs; prevent adverse childhood experiences; improve child development and school readiness; reduce involvement with the juvenile justice system and recidivism; and align services to strengthen families.

IV. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Complaints Received by Region and Office

APPENDIX B:

Child Demographics

APPENDIX C:

Adverse Findings by Office

APPENDIX A: COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY REGION AND OFFICE

The following section provides a detailed breakdown of CA regions and offices identified in OFCO complaints.

Image 1: Map of DSHS Regions

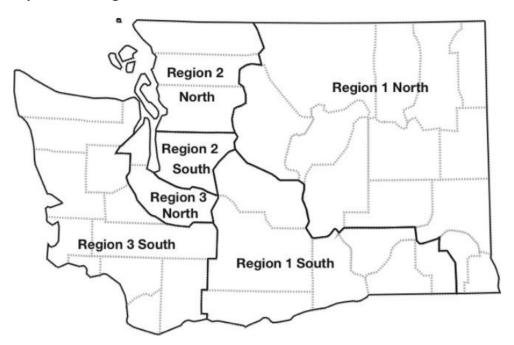


Table 9: Populations by DSHS Region³⁸

	Children Under 18 Years Residing in Region	Percent of Washington State Children Under 18 Years
Region 1 North (Spokane)	208,855	13.2%
Region 1 South (Yakima)	175,566	11.1%
Region 2 North (Everett)	263,539	16.6%
Region 2 South (Seattle)	418,141	26.4%
Region 3 North (Tacoma)	256,552	16.2%
Region 3 South (Vancouver)	264,157	16.6%

³⁸ Partners for Our Children Data Portal Team. (2016). [Graph representation of Washington state child welfare data 11/4/2016]. Count of All Children. Retrieved from http://www.vis.pocdata.org/maps/child-populationregions.

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Figure 14: OFCO Complaints Received by DSHS Region

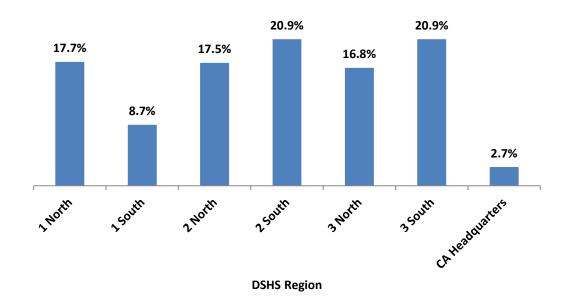


Table 10: OFCO Complaints Received by Office

REGION	OFFICE	
	Spokane DCFS	59
	Moses Lake DCFS	20
	Colville DCFS	20
	Wenatchee DCFS	7
1 North	Omak DCFS	6
I NOI tii	Newport DCFS	4
	Republic DCFS	3
	Colfax DCFS	3
	Clarkston DCFS	2
	DLR (Region 1 North)	2
	Yakima DCFS	23
	Richland/Tri-Cities DCFS	22
1 South	Walla Walla DCFS	12
1 Joutil	Ellensburg DCFS	3
	Toppenish DCFS	1
	DLR (Region 1 South)	1
	Everett DCFS	25
	Arlington/Smokey Point DCFS	24
	Bellingham DCFS	22
2 North	Monroe/Sky Valley DCFSA	21
Z NOI tii	Mount Vernon DCFS	19
	Alderwood/Lynnwood DCFS	10
	Oak Harbor DCFS	3
	DCFS Central Office (Region 2 North)	1

REGION	OFFICE	
	King South DCFS	73
	King West DCFS	22
	King East DCFS	18
2 South	Office of Indian Child Welfare	17
2 30utn	Martin Luther King Jr. DCFS	13
	White Center DCFS	3
	DLR (Region 2 South)	
	DCFS Central Office (Region 2 South)	1
	Pierce South (Lakewood) DCFS	37
	Pierce East (DCFS)	27
3 North	Bremerton/Kitsap	24
5 NORTH	Pierce West DCFS	20
	DCFS Central Office (Region 3 North)	6
	DLR (Region 3 North)	5
	Vancouver DCFS	40
	Aberdeen DCFS	22
	Tumwater DCFS	21
	Kelso DCFS	19
	Centralia DCFS	12
3 South	Shelton DCFS	11
3 30utn	Port Angeles DCFS	9
	Port Townsend DCFS	4
	Stevenson DCFS	4
	South Bend DCFS	3
	Long Beach DCFS	1
	DLR (Region 3 South)	3
	Central Intake Unit	10
	DLR-CPS	5
Other	Adoption Support Services	2
Other	Children's Administration	2
	Headquarters	
	Complaints about non-CA agencies	29

APPENDIX B: CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS

The ages of children identified in OFCO complaints closely mirrors that of the entire DCFS out of home care placement population, as shown below in Table 9.³⁹ Youth over 18 years of age identified in complaints might be participants in the Extended Foster Care Program (eligible youth may participate until they turn 21 years) or they may reflect a historical complaint about Department actions that happened when the youth was under 18.

Table 11: Child Age, 2015-2016

	2016 OFCO Complaints	2016 Out of Home Care Population
0 - 4 Years	39.9%	43.3%
5 - 9 Years	30.2%	26.1%
10 - 14 Years	20.5%	18.1%
15 - 17 Years	8.6%	12.5%
18 Years and Older	0.9%	-

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³⁹ Partners for Our Children Data Portal Team. (2016). [Graph representation of Washington state child welfare data 11/4/2016]. Children in Out-of-Home Care (Count). Retrieved from http://www.vis.pocdata.org/graphs/ooh-counts.

APPENDIX C: ADVERSE FINDINGS BY OFFICE

The following section provides a breakdown of CA offices identified in adverse findings.

Table 12: Adverse Findings by Office

REGION	OFFICE	#
1 N + -	Moses Lake DCFS	
1 North	Spokane DCFS	3
	Richland/Tri-Cities DCFS	1
1 South	Walla Walla DCFS	1
	Yakima DCFS	1
	Mount Vernon DCFS	1
2.11	Everett	1
2 North	Alderwood/Lynwood DCFS	1
	Arlington/Smokey Point	1
2.54-	King South DCFS	12
2 South	King East DCFS	9
2 N . I	Pierce West	1
3 North	DLR – Region 3 North	1
2.54-	Port Townsend	4
3 South	Port Angeles	2

OFCO STAFF

Director Ombuds

Patrick Dowd is a licensed attorney with public defense experience representing clients in dependency, termination of parental rights, juvenile offender and adult criminal proceedings. He was also a managing attorney with the Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD) Parents Representation Program and previously worked for OFCO as an ombuds from 1999 to 2005. Through his work at OFCO and OPD, Mr. Dowd has extensive professional experience in child welfare law and policy. Mr. Dowd graduated from Seattle University and earned his J.D. at the University of Oregon.

Ombuds

Cristina Limpens is a social worker with extensive experience in public child welfare in Washington State. Prior to joining OFCO, Ms. Limpens spent approximately six years as a quality assurance program manager for Children's Administration working to improve social work practice and promote accountability and outcomes for children and families. Prior to this work, Ms. Limpens spent more than six years as a caseworker working with children and families involved in the child welfare system. Ms. Limpens earned her MSW from the University of Washington. She joined OFCO in June 2012.

Ombuds

Mary Moskowitz is a licensed attorney with experience representing parents in dependency and termination of parental rights. Prior to joining OFCO, Ms. Moskowitz was a dependency attorney in Yakima County and then in Snohomish County. She has also represented children in At Risk Youth and Truancy proceedings; and has been an attorney guardian ad litem for dependent children. Ms. Moskowitz graduated from Grand Canyon University and received her J.D. from Regent University.

Ombuds

Elizabeth Bokan is a licensed attorney with experience representing Children's Administration through the Attorney General's Office. In that position she litigated dependencies, terminations, and day care and foster licensing cases. Previously, Ms. Bokan represented children in At Risk Youth, Child In Need of Services, and Truancy petitions in King County. Prior to law school she worked at Youthcare Shelter, as a youth counselor supporting young people experiencing homelessness. Ms. Bokan is a graduate of Barnard College and the University of Washington School of Law.

<u>Ombuds</u>

Melissa Montrose is a social worker with extensive experience in both direct service and administrative roles in child protection since 2002. Prior to joining OFCO, Ms. Montrose was employed by the Department of Family and Community Services, New South Wales, Australia investigating allegations of misconduct against foster parents and making recommendations in relation to improving practice for children in out-of-home care. Ms. Montrose has also had more than five years of experience as a caseworker for social services in Australia and the United Kingdom working with children and families in both investigations and family support capacity. Ms. Montrose earned her MSW from Charles Sturt University, New South Wales, Australia.

Special Projects / Database Administrator

Jessica Birklid is a public policy professional with experience in child welfare policy and research, health care, and organizational development. Prior to joining OFCO she helped hospital patients navigate the healthcare system and understand their rights and responsibilities. She also spent time conducting research and administratively supporting the Washington Commission on Children in Foster Care, with the goal of improving collaboration between the courts, child welfare partners and the education system. Ms. Birklid is a graduate of Western Washington University and the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy and Governance.

From: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 1/23/2017 5:54:14 PM

Subject: FW: No response to any emails re: on the placement list

Good morning,

I wanted to provide you some information on this situation.

From: King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Monday, January 23, 2017 9:07 AM

To: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) <GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV>

Subject: RE: No response to any emails re: on the placement list

Yes, it is a long story! This is a foster parent that is having a hard time letting a foster child go. She has made multiple complaints to several different people. We had a child in her home for some time; there was concerns with some bruising to his face. DLR CPS investigated the allegations of abuse; the injuries were inflicted but the parents didn't have any explanation on how they got on his face and inside his ear. The foster parent is a DV attorney and is using her power to try to force us to place the child back into her home. We have a staffing with DLR and it is evident that there are other issues with the foster parent that prevent us from revisiting this placement. The foster parent has requested email and phone records from the CA supervisor and staff. They have been informed not to respond to her emails. I have spoken with her on few different occasions and she doesn't like the fact that we are not going to return the child to her home. If you need more information please call me at 253 372-6001. Thank you!

From: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Saturday, January 21, 2017 4:25 PM

To: King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA) < kingcle@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Fwd: No response to any emails re: on the placement list

Do you know what this is about?

From: RCW 42.56.250(4)" < RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com >

Subject: No response to any emails re: ROWIN on the placement list

Date: 21 January 2017 15:07

To: "Connie.lambert-eckles@dshs.wa.gov" <Connie.lambert-eckles@dshs.wa.gov>, "Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA)" <GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV>, "Johnson, Bolesha R. (DSHS/CA)" <JohnsBR@dshs.wa.gov>, "King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA)" <kingcle@dshs.wa.gov>, "OFCOinfo" <OFCOinfo@ofco.wa.gov>, "Yanus, Erin W (DSHS/CA)" <YANUSEW@dshs.wa.gov> Hello.

In my last email on Tues, Jan 17th and Monday, Jan 16th, I asked for a responsive email no later than Wednesday January 18th. It is now Saturday.

Please follow up to the email and address our concerns regarding the placement of The best interest of the child, the lack of response from DSHS, not responding to voicemails or emails, and the retaliation and vindictiveness displayed by the Kent West Office.

RCW 42.56.250(4)

Fiat justitia ruat caelum

Kind regards,

RCW 42.56.250(4)

"If you can change the life of one person, you have the potential to change the world."

"Fiat Justitia, Ruat Coelum" Loosely translated: "Let Justice be done, though the heavens may fall."

From: Lambert-Eckel. Connie (DSHS/CA) To: Green. Natalie (DSHS/CA) 1/23/2017 6:23:48 PM Date: Subject: RE: No response to any emails re: Rew on the placement list Thanks....she has an incorrect email address for me....never got the messages below until just now. C. Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982 From: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Monday, January 23, 2017 9:54 AM To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov> Subject: FW: No response to any emails re: ROW on the placement list I wanted to provide you some information on this situation. From: King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA) Sent: Monday, January 23, 2017 9 07 AM To: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) < GREENNS@DSHS WA GOV> Subject: RE: No response to any emails re: ROW on the placement list Yes, it is a long story! This is a foster parent that is having a hard time letting a foster child go. She has made multiple complaints to several different people. We had a child in her home for some time; there was concerns with some bruising to his face. DLR CPS investigated the allegations of abuse; the injuries were inflicted but the parents didn't have any explanation on how they got on his face and inside his ear. The foster parent is a DV attorney and is using her power to try to force us to place the child back into her home. We have a staffing with DLR and it is evident that there are other issues with the foster parent that prevent us from revisiting this placement. The foster parent has requested email and phone records from the CA supervisor and staff. They have been informed not to respond to her emails. I have spoken with her on few different occasions and she doesn't like the fact that we are not going to return the child to her home. If you need more information please call me at 253 372-6001. Thank you! From: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Saturday, January 21, 2017 4:25 PM To: King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA) < kingcle@dshs.wa.gov> Subject: Fwd: No response to any emails re: ROW on the placement list Do you know what this is about? From: RCW 42.56.250(4) RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail com> on the placement list Subject: No response to any emails re: Date: 21 January 2017 15:07 To: "Connie lambert-eckles@dshs wa gov" < Connie lambert-eckles@dshs wa gov>, "Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA)" < GREENNS@DSHS WA GOV>, "Johnson, Bolesha R (DSHS/CA)" <<u>JohnsBR@dshs wa gov</u>>, "King, Cleveland (DSHS/CA)" <<u>kingcle@dshs wa gov</u>>, "OFCOinfo" <<u>OFCOinfo@ofco wa gov</u>>, "Yanus, Erin W (DSHS/CA)" Hello. emails, and the retaliation and vindictiveness displayed by the Kent West Office

<YANUSEW@dshs wa gov>

In my last email on Tues, Jan 17th and Monday, Jan 16th, I asked for a responsive email no later than Wednesday January 18th It is now Saturday Please follow up to the email and address our concerns regarding the placement of governments of the child, the lack of response from DSHS, not responding to voicemails or

RCW 42.56 250(4)

Fiat justitia ruat caelum

Kind regards,

RCW 42.56 250(4)

"If you can change the life of one person, you have the potential to change the world "

"Fiat Justitia, Ruat Coelum" Loosely translated: "Let Justice be done, though the heavens may fall "

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: West, Norah (DSHS)
Strus, Jennifer (DSHS)

Date: 1/26/2017 2:00:44 AM

Subject: RE: follow-ups from Shapiro

Hi Norah... A couple comments/edits below. Otherwise, from my perspective, good to go. Thanks, *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: West, Norah (DSHS)

Sent: Wednesday, January 25, 2017 3:15 PM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS) <strusj@dshs.wa.gov>; Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Harder, Diana (DSHS/EXEC) <hardedx@dshs.wa.gov>; Williams, Demetric F (DSHS/CA)

<WILLIDF1@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: follow-ups from Shapiro

Importance: High

Hi there,

I think we finally have all the answers to Nina Shapiro's follow-up questions. Let me know if I've missed the mark on any of these:

1)Out of state placements: Jennifer said she would look at the numbers and where kids are going to provide some context. (Numbers previously provided: 368 out-of-state placements in 2015, 169 of those going to a relative; roughly 360 in 2016, roughly 135 of those going to a relative.) So that indicates that most, 199, are not going to a relative. Anything more you could tell me about why you seek these out of state placements?

As we said earlier, our preference is always to start as close to home as possible with children in our care, in order to provide them with as much stability and familiarity as we can in what is already a stressful, chaotic time in their lives. Sometimes there is a relative or suitable other caregiver who lives out of state and so the child will move to live with them. There might also be an out-of-state adoptive family who can best meet the child's needs. Sometimes the particular needs of children cannot be met with existing in-state resources, or all the in-state options have been exhausted. Those needs might include medical or mental health treatment in a residential facility, group home or institution.

2RCW 13.50.100: He had a child placed with him despite a string of criminal convictions, including for domestic violence assault, as I understand it a permanent disqualifier. Jennifer said she would check on why that occurred.

We cannot speak to case specifics; however, generally speaking, background checks are not required for biological parents.

3)Whistleblower case: RCW 13.50.100 has filed a complaint with the auditor's office claiming that she is being retaliated against due to questions she raised about potential placements with people who had troubling backgrounds, including disqualifying offense. Please let me know your response to that.

(I can't rouse anyone at SAO to confirm/deny this complaint exists or whether anything's happened with it;

seems odd to me that a whistleblower, strictly speaking, would name an individual. Also checked internally with ERMO and they don't have anything) Something like: We take reports of retaliation seriously and will investigate any reports that we receive, from staff and foster parents alike, and will work with the SAO on any that they investigate. Do we want to say something about the exceptions to policy happening incredibly rarely/infrequently? This would not be an accurate statement. Agree with the comments highlighted in turquoise.

4) The number of home support, foster liaison and other specialists you lost during the recession.

Chemical Dependency Staff:

This service was provided through an Inter-Agency Agreement with the agency's former Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA). Children's Administration never officially had the FTEs although the CD staff were located in CA field offices; DASA initially contracted for 12 and then it was increased to 22 of these specialists. The expenditures started in SFY 06 and ended in SFY 11. We were funded at \$1,144,000 for these contracted positions. The 2010 supplemental budget removed \$564K; then in the 2011-13 biennial budget the remaining \$1,342,000 was removed.

Foster Care Liaisons:

This was also a contracted activity provided by a number of non-profits. These contracts operated from SFY 1998 through SFY 2007 and then were folded under the existing recruitment and retention contract but the spending on these had decreased over time. At its height in 2006, Children's Administration spent \$523,750 on this service with Olive Crest, Foster Care Resource Network of Pierce County and Lutheran Community Services Northwest. Under the current recruitment and retention contracts, CA has liaisons but these positions do a variety of recruitment and retention activities. CA may also have supplemented with positions in the region but there is no way to identify those positions historically.

Home Support Specialists:

Going back as far as 1998, Children's Administration had between 60 and 66 of these positions until 2003. That number dropped to around 40 from 2004 through 2009, then to 20 in 2010 and by 2012 they were fully eliminated. This job class is no longer active. We spent \$2.3 million on these positions in 1998. Combined at their heights, these positions totaled \$4.3 million, which would fund between 40 and 60 staff, depending on the classifications.

5) One other thing: Jennifer didn't talk much about the shortage of foster homes (1,000 less than there used to be). I'm wondering how she sees the impact of that. Is there anything more she can say?

We actually don't see 1,000 less than there used to be (see below). In recent months we have seen the total number of general foster care homes licenses, while not staggeringly increasing, the number has consistently risen. The attrition rate of licensed foster homes has remained steady over the last decade. On average only 40 percent of foster homes will still be licensed three years after initial licensing. Where the impact comes is homes that are not licensed for or equipped to care for the increasing number of kids in foster care with exceptionally high needs.

	Total Foster Care	Licensed Foster Care	Foster Homes	Average Homes with Placement
2012	9,386	5,947	5,253	4,045
2013	9,531	5,933	5,133	3,952
2014	10,138	6,086	5,125	3,946
2015	10,273	6,024	4,945	3,808
2016	10,444	5,985	5,961	4,590

Thanks again, Nina Nina Shapiro Seattle Times reporter (206) 464-3303

Twitter: @NinaShapiro

http://www.seattletimes.com/author/nina-shapiro/

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA)

Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 2/3/2017 8:59:21 PM

Subject: RE: FYI

That is the intention in letting you know. **RCW 13.50.100** . This is not retaliation....this is a licensing infraction and as such needs to be followed up by the licensor. *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA)
Sent: Friday, February 3, 2017 12:58 PM

To: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) <GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV> **Cc:** Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: FYI

I am concerned that this foster mother is sharing case-specific information outside of DSHS. I don't want to have this interpreted as retaliation, but is there a reason we should not call in an intake on her violation of confidentiality?

From: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Friday, February 3, 2017 12:42 PM

To: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) < hancoda@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FYI

Connie wanted me to pass this on — so you are aware of what this foster mom is doing.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA)

Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA)

Date: 2/10/2017 4:16:12 PM Subject: FW:RCW 42.56.250(4)

Hello ladies...

Please see the messages below. The Canfields/FPAWS met with Jennifer yesterday related to concerns they have about Caregiver Core Training. This matter came up and Mr. Canfield followed up with the emails from the FPAWS rep, Mary McGauhey, who has apparently been working with the f/pRCW 42.56.250(4).

The concern is the communication between the supervisor and the foster parent/relative to the child. Please follow up and see what you can find out about what happened. This is the kind of thing that the Canfields are keen to bring to our attention as they smack of precursors to 'retaliation'.....

I would also like to know a bit of about the case plan. Thanks so much, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS)

Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 7:53 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4)

I met with Mike and Beth yesterday. They discussed this case with me (see below). I would appreciate it if you could look into whether the sup really said this stuff. Not sure the case name is included so if not let me know please. Thanks. J

From: Mike Canfiled [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net]

Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 6:24 PM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS) < strusj@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4)

As promised, our Mary has been working with these folks. Mike

Mike Canfield

Foster ParentsAssociation of Washington State

www.fpaws.org

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800-391-CARE (2273) FPAWS is a 501 (C) (3) EIN 23-7300163 WA State SOS Charity Reg.# 1692 From: RCW 13.50.100 @yahoo.com [mailto: RCW 13.50.100 @yahoo.com] Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 6:10 PM @comcast.net>; Beth Canfield RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net> To: Mike Canfiled Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4) Hi, I forgot to add it is out of the Monroe Office, and one of the things the supervisor told (the part that scared her) was "When you go over my head to the Ombudsman and Constituent Relations it makes me feel like we are fighting and that makes me angry " When reminded that ROW 42.56.250(4) had cc'd her on her e-mails without a response, she "I like to let my staff handle things on their own". I put quotes in - the wording may have been slightly different but I think I got the gest of it. RGW 42.56.250(4) can tell you in more detail. Mary Mary McGauhey Region 2N. Director to the Board Foster Parents Association of Washington State 1-800-391-2273 From: RCW 13.50.100 @yahoo.com Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 1:42 PM To: Mike Canfiled; Beth Canfield Subject: RCW 42.56.250(4) called me this AM – There was a family meeting yesterday for her nephew. Both bio parents were there with their attorney's, present caregiver was there. Past SW – Ilene Brady(not at meeting), current SW of 1 month Marlene Gregson, Supervisor – Monica Christenson. wants to care for her nephew full time – $\frac{RCW 13.50.100}{E}$ Issues discussed; *meeting was started with a joke about how long it had been since a meeting was held on this case *Parents are willing to discuss temporarily termination rights so they have time to "get their acts together" to be his guardian if that happens in this case *Parents indicated they want *current caregiver has hired an attorney - she wants to keep baby *contact from Ombudsman and constituent relations was discussed – Supervisor was dismayed she wasn't contacted first????? (Despite her having been sent multiple e-mails and cc'd on others.) stayed back to discuss her husbands background clearance with Supervisor. met with SW and Sup – was told it made supervisor unhappy to be contacted by Ombudsman and Constituent "you need to come to me first if you have a concern" While there was lots of laughter the message given was don't go over my head – I make the decisions. is scared the Department is angry with her and will not let her have custody of her nephew, maybe even stop her from seeing him at Mom's in daycare. Call me if you need anymore information. RCW 42 56.250(4) cell # is RCW 42.56.250(4). We do have a release from her. Mary Mary McGauhey

Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002206

Region 2N. Director to the Board

Foster Parents Association of Washington State 1-800-391-2273

From: Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA)

Date: 2/10/2017 4:19:23 PM Subject: RE: RCW 13.50.100

Moring Connie -we will get you some information soon.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Friday, February 10, 2017 8:16 AM

To: Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA) <JewelSS@dshs.wa.gov>; Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA) <turnepa@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) < GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV>

Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4)

Importance: High

Hello ladies...

Please see the messages below. The Canfields/FPAWS met with Jennifer yesterday related to concerns they have about Caregiver Core Training. This matter came up and Mr. Canfield followed up with the emails from the FPAWS rep, Mary McGauhey, who has apparently been working with the f/p, RCW 42.56.250(4).

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I would also like to know a bit of about the case plan. Thanks so much, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

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Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 7:53 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4)

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From: RCW 13.50.100 @yahoo.com [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @yahoo.com]

Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 6:10 PM

To: Mike Canfiled @comcast.net>; Beth Canfield RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net>

Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4)

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Region 2N. Director to the Board Foster Parents Association of Washington State 1-800-391-2273 From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA)

Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA)

Date: 2/16/2017 3:19:55 PM Subject: RE: RCW 42.56.250(4)

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Children's Administration
lambecm@dshs.wa.gov
360-902-7982

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Mary McGauhey

Region 2N. Director to the Board Foster Parents Association of Washington State 1-800-391-2273 From: Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA)

Date: 2/16/2017 4:12:40 PM Subject: RE: RCW 42.56.250(4)

Sorry for the delay Connie, you are not a nuisance either.

Sandra and I will have a response for you today. The supervisor wrote a document of the events but I want to review with Sandra before we send that along.

Thanks

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 7:20 AM

To: Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA) <turnepa@dshs.wa.gov>; Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA) <JewelSS@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) < GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV>

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Region 2N. Director to the Board Foster Parents Association of Washington State 1-800-391-2273

From: @yahoo.com

Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 1:42 PM

To: Mike Canfiled; Beth Canfield Subject: RCW 42.56.250(4)

called me this AM – There was a family meeting yesterday for her nephew. Both bio parents were there with their attorney's, present caregiver was there. Past SW – Ilene Brady(not at meeting), current SW of 1 month – Marlene Gregson, Supervisor – Monica Christenson.

wants to care for her nephew full time – $\frac{RCW}{13.50.100}$

Issues discussed;

- *meeting was started with a joke about how long it had been since a meeting was held on this case
- *Parents are willing to discuss temporarily termination rights so they have time to "get their acts together"
 - *Parents indicated they want RCW 42.56.250(4) to be his guardian if that happens in this case
 - *current caregiver has hired an attorney she wants to keep baby
- *contact from Ombudsman and constituent relations was discussed Supervisor was dismayed she wasn't contacted first????? (Despite her having been sent multiple e-mails and cc'd on others.)

After meeting RCW 42.56.250(4) stayed back to discuss her husbands background clearance with Supervisor. met with SW and Sup — was told it made supervisor unhappy to be contacted by Ombudsman and Constituent Relations. Told RCW 42.56.250(4) "you need to come to me first if you have a concern" While there was lots of laughter the message given was don't go over my head — I make the decisions.

is scared the Department is angry with her and will not let her have custody of her nephew, maybe even stop her from seeing him at Mom's in daycare.

Call me if you need anymore information. RCW 42 56.250(4) cell # is RCW 42.56.250(4). We do have a release from her.

Mary

Mary McGauhey

Region 2N. Director to the Board Foster Parents Association of Washington State 1-800-391-2273 From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA)

Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA)

Date: 2/16/2017 7:59:58 PM Subject: RE: RCW 42.56.250(4)

Very good....thank you, Patty and Sandra! C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

From: Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 8:13 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>; Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA)

<JewelSS@dshs.wa.gov>

360-902-7982

Cc: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) < GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV>

Subject: RE: RCW 42.56.250(4)

Sorry for the delay Connie, you are not a nuisance either.

Sandra and I will have a response for you today. The supervisor wrote a document of the events but I want to review with Sandra before we send that along.

Thanks

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 7:20 AM

To: Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA) < turnepa@dshs.wa.gov>; Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA) < JewelSS@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) < GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV>

Subject: RERCW 42.56.250(4)

Hi...don't want to be a nuisance but do we know anything further at this point? Many thanks, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

360-902-7982

From: Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA) Sent: Friday, February 10, 2017 8:19 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >; Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA)

<JewelSS@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) < GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV>

Subject: RE: RCW 42.56.250(4)

Moring Connie -we will get you some information soon.

Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002217 From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Friday, February 10, 2017 8:16 AM

To: Jewell, Sandra (DSHS/CA) <
JewelSS@dshs.wa.gov>; Turner, Patricia A. (DSHS/CA) < turnepa@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Green, Natalie (DSHS/CA) < GREENNS@DSHS.WA.GOV>

Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4)

Importance: High

Hello ladies...

Please see the messages below. The Canfields/FPAWS met with Jennifer yesterday related to concerns they have about Caregiver Core Training. This matter came up and Mr. Canfield followed up with the emails from the FPAWS rep, Mary McGauhey, who has apparently been working with the f/p, RCW 42.56.250(4).

The concern is the communication between the supervisor and the foster parent/relative to the child. Please follow up and see what you can find out about what happened. This is the kind of thing that the Canfields are keen to bring to our attention as they smack of precursors to 'retaliation'.....

I would also like to know a bit of about the case plan. Thanks so much, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS)

Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 7:53 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4)

I met with Mike and Beth yesterday. They discussed this case with me (see below). I would appreciate it if you could look into whether the sup really said this stuff. Not sure the case name is included so if not let me know please. Thanks. J

From: Mike Canfiled [mailto @comcast.net]

Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 6:24 PM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS) < strusi@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4)

As promised, our Mary has been working with these folks. Mike

Mike Canfield

Foster Parents Association of Washington State

www.fpaws.org

Washington State Aggression Replacement Trainer of Trainers/Consultant

www.mikecanfield.net

360-990-1255

investment at https://fpaws.ejoinme.org/invest Contact FPAWS at www.fpaws.org or 800-391-CARE (2273) FPAWS is a 501 (C) (3) EIN 23-7300163 WA State SOS Charity Reg.# 1692
From: RCW 13.50.100 @yahoo.com [mailto: RCW 13.50.100 @yahoo.com] Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 6:10 PM To: Mike Canfiled < CCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net >; Beth Canfield < RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net > Subject: FW: RCW 42.56.250(4)
Hi, I forgot to add it is out of the Monroe Office, and one of the things the supervisor told scared her) was "When you go over my head to the Ombudsman and Constituent Relations it makes me feel like we are fighting and that makes me angry "When reminded that response, she "I like to let my staff handle things on their own". I put quotes in - the wording may have been slightly different but I think I got the gest of it.
Mary
Mary McGauhey
Region 2N. Director to the Board Foster Parents Association of Washington State 1-800-391-2273
From: RCW 13.50.100 @yahoo.com Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 1:42 PM To: Mike Canfiled; Beth Canfield Subject: RCW 42.56.250(4)
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Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002219

Mary

Mary McGauhey

Region 2N. Director to the Board Foster Parents Association of Washington State 1-800-391-2273 From: <u>Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)</u>

To: <u>Strus, Jennifer (DSHS)</u>
Date: 3/10/2017 4:53:41 PM

Subject: OFCO

Hi...

Darcey just called me....

Apparently Patrick Dowd/OFCO contacted John Rogers with RDA asking for information about foster parents....how long they stay foster parents and whether they work with a CPA or the State.....working on a statewide look at Retaliation by SW staff against fps. Thinking that the foster parent survey collected this information. It did not. Darcey will contact OFCO and state that....the info is not available and was not collected through the survey. Darcey talked with Tammy who confirmed the data was not collected but thought maybe we should start collecting it in future surveys.

Apparently Michelle Caldier also has a Facebook survey in play asking fps how long they have been fp....not sure what else is being asked.

Shannon Meade with the 'Foster Innovations Lab' is doing something similar on her FB page asking fp to post information.

Sigh.... C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982 From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: <u>Strus, Jennifer (DSHS)</u>
Date: 3/10/2017 4:59:55 PM

Subject: FW: Data Questions Regarding 2015 Foster Parent Survey

More on the OFCO request. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel
Director: Field Operations
Children's Administration
lambecm@dshs.wa.gov
360-902-7982

From: Birklid, Jessica (GOV)

Sent: Friday, March 10, 2017 8:59 AM

To: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) < hancoda@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Rogers, John (DSHS/RDA) <rogerjd2@dshs.wa.gov>; Geiger, Barbara (DSHS/CA) <GeigeBL@dshs.wa.gov>;

Cordova, Tammy (DSHS/CA) <CordoTK@dshs.wa.gov>; Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

<LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>; Dowd, Patrick (GOV) <Patrick.Dowd@ofco.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Data Questions Regarding 2015 Foster Parent Survey

Thank you Darcey and John for following up so quickly. I didn't think the information was collected but figure it never hurts to ask.

Best, Jessica

Jessica Birklid, MPA

Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds

From: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) Sent: Friday, March 10, 2017 8:53 AM

To: Birklid, Jessica (GOV)

Cc: Rogers, John (DSHS/RDA); Geiger, Barbara (DSHS/CA); Cordova, Tammy (DSHS/CA); Lambert-Eckel, Connie

(DSHS/CA)

Subject: FW: Data Questions Regarding 2015 Foster Parent Survey

Importance: High

Hello...The information you seek was not part of the data set for the Foster Parent Survey. That information may be something to consider for future surveys.

From: Rogers, John (DSHS/RDA) Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2017 4:06 PM

To: Pierce, Jessica M. (DSHS/CA) < PiercJM@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: FW: Data Questions Regarding 2015 Foster Parent Survey

John Rogers, Ph.D. Senior Survey Research Manager Division of Research and Data Analysis

> Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002222

Washington Department of Social and Health Services

Phone: 360-902-0804

Email: John.Rogers@dshs.wa.gov

Audio/Video conferencing: Skype for Business (on demand), WebEx (by appointment)

From: Birklid, Jessica (GOV)

Sent: Tuesday, March 07, 2017 2:57 PM

To: Kohlenberg, Liz (DSHS/RDA) < kohleer@dshs.wa.gov">kohleer@dshs.wa.gov; Rogers, John (DSHS/RDA) < rogerjd2@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Data Questions Regarding 2015 Foster Parent Survey

Hello,

The Office of Family and Children's Ombuds is currently engaged in community conversations with foster parents across the state, particularly focused on their experience with and concerns/fears of retaliation by Children's Administration. Part of this project has led us to review the *Foster Parent Surveys: DSHS Foster Parents Speak*. Reading the survey script and questions it does not appear that further background information on foster parents was collected from the foster parent but I wanted to follow up to be sure.

Specifically, I am wondering if information was collected on (A) whether the foster parent was licensed through the state or a private agency and (B) how long the individual has been a foster parent. If this information was collected, was there any significant difference in survey response results based on who licenses a foster parent and how long they've been fostering?

Please let me know if I can be more specific. Thank you so much.

Best, Jessica Birklid

Jessica Birklid, MPA

Special Projects/Database Coordinator Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds 6840 Fort Dent Way, Suite 125 Tukwila, WA 98188

Phone: (206) 439-3870 Fax: (206) 439-3877 Beth Canfield < RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net>

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 3/17/2017 9:36:52 PM

Subject: FW: Attn. Beth

Could you take a look at the first e-mail in this string and see if you think there is a way to assure that the child is safe and address how the foster parent is being treated.

It seems to me that foster parents rights include advocating for the children in their care. Foster parents are the volunteers and do not know how DLR interprets that. Thanks a ton, Beth

[mailtdRCW 13.50.100@gmail.com] From:

Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 12:50 PM

To: Beth Canfield Subject: Re: Attn. Beth

Yakima, the juvenile court office.

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 17, 2017, at 12:20 PM, Beth Canfield < @comcast.net> wrote:

I would ask constituent relations what can be done. I will look into it as well and let you know what I find out. Which office is this out of? Take care, Beth

From: RCW 42.56.250(4) [mailto RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 12:08 PM

To: Beth Canfield Subject: Re: Attn. Beth

Beth.

Will do. We are anxious to hear what they have to say. I also just spoke with the licensor who is investigating us and she said that she still hasn't heard back from the GAL or CASA from our case. It has been weeks now since she began looking into the allegations and she has tried to contact them via email and phone. They are not responding back to her. I truly believe it is because they know that they made mistakes in our case (mainly the CASA never showed up) and the best interest of the baby was not advocated for. Is there anything that can be done in our case to appeal the court's decision to move the baby, due to lack of involvement and true unbiased advocating from our CASA? And also, shouldn't the department be held accountable to look at the best interest of the child?

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 17, 2017, at 11:56 AM, Beth Canfield < <u>@comcast.net</u>> wrote:

Please let me know what they have to say. Take care, Beth

From: RCW 42.56.250(4) [mailto RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2017 4:05 PM

@comcast.net Subject: Re: Attn. Beth

Constituent relations said that they was looking into it and get back to me by Monday. Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra

DCYF - 002224

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 16, 2017, at 2:21 PM, <u>acomcast.net</u> wrote:

Have you gotten any responses? Did they tell you that they will look into it?

RCW 42.56.250(4) RCW 42.56.250(4) agmail.com>

@comcast.net

Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2017 1:24:20 PM

Subject: Re: Attn. Beth

Yes, both!

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 16, 2017, at 11:43 AM, RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net wrote:

Have you filed a complaint with the Ombuds office or constituent relations? They would have the ability to look into the safety issues for this child. Beth

RCW 42.56.250(4) oggmail.com> From: RCW 42.56.250(4)

To: fpaws@fpaws.org

Sent: Wednesday, March 15, 2017 6:17:44 PM

Subject: Attn. Beth

To Whom It May Concern:

We accepted a child from the department in June of 2016 RCW 13.50.100

Our baby was given a social worker and a couple months later, was assigned a CASA volunteer. We had her for 8 months. During this time we had a couple concerns that were never addressed by the Casa or social worker. In

the beginning our concern was about the visitation location. RCW 13.50.100

. We submitted this report along

with our written concern to the department and CASA. Our CASA seemed grateful that we provided this information to her however, she never attended court and never addressed this dangerous location. For months, visits continued in mothers home.

The child in our care had a dozen family members step forward and the Investigate West / Abramo, Alledra decided to place the child with the first one that passed a

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002225

When it came time for the family planning meeting, we were excluded until the last 5 min to be informed that our foster child would be moved to the great aunt that we had concerns about. The mediator of the FTDM concluded the meeting by saying? "It's not about who can provide the better home or the better college education, it's about us following our policy."

This literally made me sick. We understand the department's policy to place the child with family, but we also understand that part of the policy is also to protect and look after the best interest of the child. We love the child in our home and want the very best for her. We don't understand why the department would overlook what is in this child's best interest. In fact, after doing extensive research and discussing out case with a therapist who specializes in child development and attachment, we have learned that this is very traumatic for children, especially at the 9 month age. We presented this information to our social worker and the GAL. We are devastated that the department would follow policy at the expense of the health and well-being of this child we love.

After the FTDM, we decided to write our concerns down in a letter for the judge, in 1 last attempt to have our concerns heard.



Our 3 main issues are as follows:

1. Our CASA never did her job, and even when we went up the chain, she still never showed up to advocate for the child in court, never attended a visit between the child and birth mother and never looked into our concerns about the visitation location. Even at the final court hearing, our CASA never showed up to advocate and disagree with the department's decision to move the baby in with this questionable great aunt. RCW 13.50.100

· We had concerns very early on in the case with her involvement as our CASA It was our understanding that she would

be a non-biased party to the case with the sole job of advocating for the best interest of the child. She was a former social worker, and in one of our first meetings, made it clear that she would not recommend anything to the court that went against the policy of the department, or "she would be ridiculed by the defense attorney or the social worker". She also stated that it is ALWAYS best for a child to be with biological family and that we needed to do our research. Well, we did! We worked our way up the chain, speaking to her supervisor as well as Keith Gilbertson, the head of casa. There was discussion early on about possibly changing our CASA, but the case moved very quickly after that and she failed to advocate what so ever for the best interest of the child.

- On top of all that, we are also receiving false allegations from our CASA, where she stated that she felt so threatened by us that she would not come to our home. It appears there is retaliation because we spoke to her supervisors about her lack of action.
- 2. As soon as the judge ordered for the bio great aunt to take baby, the department didn't allow for transitioning but told us they were just going to pick her up. (even though the baby had only met this aunt a few times) This shows the child's well being was not considered and now she would endure more trauma that could have been lessened by a transition period.
- 3. Retaliation: After our foster child's case concluded, a complaint was filed against us and we have been under investigation. The allegations were false, but we have not heard the final verdict. We accepted a new case and the new bio family has one of the same attorneys. Yet again, another complaint has been filed against us.

We desire for our concerns, about our previous foster child to be addressed. We also would like the retaliation to stop. We are extremely discouraged by the disrespect and abuse we have experienced from the department and the defense attorneys. We aren't even sure if we want to continue fostering until legislation is changed and foster parents are actually respected as a valuable member of the team. We have sacrificed so much to love the children in our care and feel very burned. Not only has it traumatized us, but also our three biological children as well. As we tell our story, we realize that this negative experience is extremely common and I'm not surprised that our state is losing foster parents left and right. I will not recommend anyone to become a foster parent until this abuse stops and foster parents have some rights. We became foster parents to help children, but feel our hands are tied due to rigid policy that disregards logic and the best interest of children. I am very discouraged that the child's best interest is not first and foremost. This desperately needs to change.

Thank you for hearing our concerns. Please call me with any questions.

RCW 42.56.250(4)

RCW 42.56.250(4) <u>@gmail.com</u> // RCW 42.56.250(4)

Sent from my iPhone

To: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA)

Date: 3/17/2017 9:43:17 PM

Subject: FW: Attn. Beth

Hi Becky...

It looks like you may have already been contacted about this case.....to that end will you please share with me what you learn? Many thanks, *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Beth Canfield [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net]

Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 2:37 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: Attn. Beth

Could you take a look at the first e-mail in this string and see if you think there is a way to assure that the child is safe and address how the foster parent is being treated.

It seems to me that foster parents rights include advocating for the children in their care. Foster parents are the volunteers and do not know how DLR interprets that. Thanks a ton, Beth

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Beth,

Will do. We are anxious to hear what they have to say. I also just spoke with the licensor who is investigating us and she said that she still hasn't heard back from the GAL or CASA from our case. It has been weeks now since she began looking into the allegations and she has tried to contact them via email and phone.

They are not responding back to her. I truly believe it is because they know that they made mistakes in our case (mainly the CASA never showed up) and the best interest of the baby was not advocated for. Is there anything that can be done in our case to appeal the court's decision to move the baby, due to lack of involvement and true unbiased advocating from our CASA? And also, shouldn't the department be held accountable to look at the best interest of the child?



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We submitted this report along with our written concern to the department and CASA. Our CASA seemed grateful that we provided this information to her however, she never attended court and never addressed this dangerous location. For months, visits continued in mothers home.

The child in our care had a dozen family members step forward and the department decided to place the child with the first one that passed a background check. (A great-aunt located 2 ½ hours away) RCW 13.50.100

I brought up this concern with the CASA and she agreed that the child should not be placed there. I shared my concern with the social worker yet the concern was never followed up on.

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- We had concerns very early on in the case with her involvement as our CASA It was our understanding that she would be a non-biased party to the case with the sole job of advocating for the best interest of the child. She was a former social worker, and in one of our first meetings, made it clear that she would not recommend anything to the court that went against the policy of the department, or "she would be ridiculed by the defense attorney or the social worker". She also stated that it is ALWAYS best for a child to be with biological family and that we needed to do our research. Well, we did! We worked our way up the chain, speaking to her supervisor as well as Keith Gilbertson, the head of casa. There was discussion early on about possibly changing our CASA, but the case moved very quickly after that and she failed to advocate what so ever for the best interest of the child.
- On top of all that, we are also receiving false allegations from our CASA, where she stated that she felt so threatened by us that she would not come to our home. It appears there is retaliation because we spoke to her supervisors about her lack of action.
- 2. As soon as the judge ordered for the bio great aunt to take baby, the department didn't allow for transitioning but told us they were just going to pick her up. (even though the baby had only met this aunt a few times) This shows the child's well being was not considered and now she would endure more trauma that could have been lessened by a transition period.
- 3. Retaliation: After our foster child's case concluded, a complaint was filed against us and we have been under investigation. The allegations were false, but we have not heard the final verdict. We accepted a new case and the new bio family has one of the same attorneys. Yet again, another complaint has been filed against us.

We desire for our concerns, about our previous foster child to be addressed. We also would like the retaliation to stop. We are extremely discouraged by the disrespect and abuse we have experienced from the department and the defense attorneys. We aren't even sure if we want to continue fostering until legislation is changed and foster parents are actually respected as a valuable member of the team. We have sacrificed so much to love the children in our care and feel very burned. Not only has it traumatized us, but also our three biological children as well. As we tell our story, we realize that this negative experience is extremely common and I'm not surprised that our state is losing foster parents left and right. I will not recommend anyone to become a foster parent until this abuse stops and foster parents have some rights. We became foster parents to help children, but feel our hands are tied due to rigid policy that disregards logic and the best

interest of children. I am very discouraged that the child's best interest is not first and foremost. This desperately needs to change.

Thank you for hearing our concerns. Please call me with any questions.

RCW 42.56.250(4)

RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com // RCW 42.56.250(4)

Sent from my iPhone

To: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA)

Date: 3/17/2017 9:53:43 PM

Subject: RE: Attn. Beth

No...please respond. No need to hold you up. Thanks in advance for sending me your summary/response to the Thanks much, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 2:53 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Attn. Beth

Yes, I was in the middle of typing an email response to ROW 42.58.250(4). Would you just like me to give you a summary of the situation from FamLink and hold off on my response to them? Or go ahead and respond to them? obviously I can give you a summary either way.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 2:43 PM

To: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) < TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov Cc: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) < HitchED@dshs.wa.gov

Subject: FW: Attn. Beth

Hi Becky...

It looks like you may have already been contacted about this case.....to that end will you please share with me what you learn? Many thanks, *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Beth Canfield [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net]

Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 2:37 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: FW: Attn. Beth

Could you take a look at the first e-mail in this string and see if you think there is a way to assure that the child is safe and address how the foster parent is being treated.

It seems to me that foster parents rights include advocating for the children in their care. Foster parents are the volunteers and do not know how DLR interprets that. Thanks a ton, Beth

From: RCW 42.56.250(4) [mailto RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 12:50 PM

To: Beth Canfield **Subject:** Re: Attn. Beth

Yakima, the juvenile court office.

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 17, 2017, at 12:20 PM, Beth Canfield < RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net > wrote:

I would ask constituent relations what can be done. I will look into it as well and let you know what I find out. Which office is this out of? Take care, Beth

From: [mailtc RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 12:08 PM

To: Beth Canfield **Subject:** Re: Attn. Beth

Beth,

Will do. We are anxious to hear what they have to say. I also just spoke with the licensor who is investigating us and she said that she still hasn't heard back from the GAL or CASA from our case. It has been weeks now since she began looking into the allegations and she has tried to contact them via email and phone. They are not responding back to her. I truly believe it is because they know that they made mistakes in our case (mainly the CASA never showed up) and the best interest of the baby was not advocated for. Is there anything that can be done in our case to appeal the court's decision to move the baby, due to lack of involvement and true unbiased advocating from our CASA? And also, shouldn't the department be held accountable to look at the best interest of the child?

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 17, 2017, at 11:56 AM, Beth Canfield RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net wrote:

Please let me know what they have to say. Take care, Beth

From: RCW 42.56.250(4) [mailto RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2017 4:05 PM

To: RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net
Subject: Re: Attn. Beth

Constituent relations said that they was looking into it and get back to me by Monday.

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 16, 2017, at 2:21 PM, RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net wrote:

Have you gotten any responses? Did they tell you that they will look into it?

From: 'RCW 42.56.250(4)" < RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com>

To: RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net

Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2017 1:24:20 PM

Subject: Re: Attn. Beth

Yes, both!

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 16, 2017, at 11:43 AM, RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net wrote:



Have you filed a complaint with the Ombuds office or constituent relations? They would have the ability to look into the safety issues for this child. Beth

From: RCW 42.56.250(4) RCW 42.56.250(4) agmail.com>

To: fpaws@fpaws.org

Sent: Wednesday, March 15, 2017 6:17:44 PM

Subject: Attn. Beth

To Whom It May Concern:

ur baby was given a social worker and a couple months later, was assigned a CASA volunteer. We had her for 8 months. During this time we had a couple concerns that were **never addressed** by the Casa or social worker. In the beginning our concern was about the visitation location. **RCW 13.50.100**

We accepted a child from the department in June of 2016. RCW 13.50.100

We submitted this report along with our written concern to the department and CASA. Our CASA seemed grateful that we provided this information to her however, she never attended court and never addressed this dangerous location. For months, visits continued in mothers home.

The child in our care had a dozen family members step forward and the department decided to place the child with the first one that passed a background check. (A great-aunt located 2 ½ hours away) RCW 13.50.100

I brought up this concern with the CASA and she agreed that the child should not be placed there. I shared my concern with the social worker yet the concern was never followed up on.

When it came time for the family planning meeting, we were excluded until the last 5 min to be informed that our foster child would be moved to the great aunt that we had concerns about. The mediator of the FTDM concluded the meeting by

saying? "It's not about who can provide the better home or the better college education, it's about us following our policy."

This literally made me sick. We understand the department's policy to place the child with family, but we also understand that part of the policy is also to protect and look after the best interest of the child. We love the child in our home and want the very best for her. We don't understand why the department would overlook what is in this child's best interest. In fact, after doing extensive research and discussing out case with a therapist who specializes in child development and attachment, we have learned that this is very traumatic for children, especially at the 9 month age. We presented this information to our social worker and the GAL. We are devastated that the department would follow policy at the expense of the health and well-being of this child we love.

After the FTDM, we decided to write our concerns down in a letter for the judge, in 1 last attempt to have our concerns heard.



Our 3 main issues are as follows:

- 1. Our CASA never did her job, and even when we went up the chain, she still never showed up to advocate for the child in court, never attended a visit between the child and birth mother and never looked into our concerns about the visitation location. Even at the final court hearing, our CASA never showed up to advocate and disagree with the department's decision to move the baby in with this questionable great aunt.
 - We had concerns very early on in the case with her involvement as our CASA It was our understanding that she would be a non-biased party to the case with the sole job of advocating for the best interest of the child. She was a former social worker, and in one of our first meetings, made it clear that she would not recommend anything to the court that went against the policy of the department, or "she would be ridiculed by the defense attorney or the social worker". She also stated that it is ALWAYS best for a child to be with biological family and that we needed to do our research. Well, we did! We worked our way up the chain, speaking to her supervisor as well as Keith Gilbertson, the head of casa. There was discussion early on about possibly changing our CASA, but the case moved very quickly after that and she failed to advocate what so ever for the best interest of the child.
 - On top of all that, we are also receiving false allegations from our CASA, where she stated that she felt so threatened by us that she would not come to our home. It appears there is retaliation

because we spoke to her supervisors about her lack of action.

- 2. As soon as the judge ordered for the bio great aunt to take baby, the department didn't allow for transitioning but told us they were just going to pick her up. (even though the baby had only met this aunt a few times) This shows the child's well being was not considered and now she would endure more trauma that could have been lessened by a transition period.
- 3. Retaliation: After our foster child's case concluded, a complaint was filed against us and we have been under investigation. The allegations were false, but we have not heard the final verdict. We accepted a new case and the new bio family has one of the same attorneys. Yet again, another complaint has been filed against us.

We desire for our concerns, about our previous foster child to be addressed. We also would like the retaliation to stop. We are extremely discouraged by the disrespect and abuse we have experienced from the department and the defense attorneys. We aren't even sure if we want to continue fostering until legislation is changed and foster parents are actually respected as a valuable member of the team. We have sacrificed so much to love the children in our care and feel very burned. Not only has it traumatized us, but also our three biological children as well. As we tell our story, we realize that this negative experience is extremely common and I'm not surprised that our state is losing foster parents left and right. I will not recommend anyone to become a foster parent until this abuse stops and foster parents have some rights. We became foster parents to help children, but feel our hands are tied due to rigid policy that disregards logic and the best interest of children. I am very discouraged that the child's best interest is not first and foremost. This desperately needs to change.

Thank you for hearing our concerns. Please call me with any questions.

RCW 42.56.250(4)

RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com // RCW 42.56.250(4)

Sent from my iPhone

To: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA)

Date: 3/20/2017 3:03:02 PM

Subject: RE: Attn. Beth

Thanks so much, Becky! C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel
Director: Field Operations
Children's Administration
lambecm@dshs.wa.gov
360-902-7982

From: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 4:19 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Attn. Beth

Hi Connie.

I attached the email response I sent to RCW42.56.250(4). Here is what I found in FamLink:

The RCW 13.50.100(7)(c) made an intake stating that the foster parents were interfering with permanency for the child. The allegations were:

- The foster parents (along with the child) participated in an attachment and bonding assessment without permission from the Department or court
- The foster parents got information from a "friend in law enforcement" regarding the criminal behavior of the relatives who wanted placement of the child
- o The foster parents have harassed the SW and CASA.
- o The intake also acknowledges that there is a strong bond between the child and foster parents.

DLR is currently investigating (non CPS). DLR has talked to the SW who stated that the foster parents were told by a supervisor not to obtain information regarding past criminal activity that occurred in the mother's residence. SW also reported that somehow the foster parents completed a background check on the current relative placement and that they requested that the Department require attachment and bonding classes of the relative. Provider notes indicate that the DLR worker left messages for the

Foster mother reported to SAM specialist that they never interfered with the child's plan and that the child did not participate in an attachment evaluation. She states they reached out to a therapist to educate themselves about attachment and bonding and how it affects children. They said they provided general information about the child to the therapist. The therapist was apparently recommending whether or not the child should have a bonding and attachment assessment done.

Regarding the mother's visits, the court ruled that visits are to remain in the mother's home.

There is an approved home study on the relative who is currently caring for the child. RCW 13.50.100

There was some criminal history on the aunt and uncle which was addressed through administrative approvals. This is all addressed in the home study.

Let me know if you have any questions or if you need anything else. Have a great weekend! Becky

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 2:54 PM

> Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002239

To: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) < TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: RE: Attn. Beth

No...please respond. No need to hold you up. Thanks in advance for sending me your summary/response to the Thanks much, *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) **Sent:** Friday, March 17, 2017 2:53 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Attn. Beth

Yes, I was in the middle of typing an email response to Would you just like me to give you a summary of the situation from FamLink and hold off on my response to them? Or go ahead and respond to them? obviously I can give you a summary either way.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) **Sent:** Friday, March 17, 2017 2:43 PM

To: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) < <u>TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov</u>> **Cc:** Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) < <u>HitchED@dshs.wa.gov</u>>

Subject: FW: Attn. Beth

Hi Becky...

It looks like you may have already been contacted about this case.....to that end will you please share with me what you learn? Many thanks, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Beth Canfield [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net]

Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 2:37 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: FW: Attn. Beth

Could you take a look at the first e-mail in this string and see if you think there is a way to assure that the child is safe and address how the foster parent is being treated.

It seems to me that foster parents rights include advocating for the children in their care. Foster parents are the volunteers and do not know how DLR interprets that. Thanks a ton, Beth

RCW 42.56.250(4) [mailtoRCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 12:50 PM

To: Beth Canfield **Subject:** Re: Attn. Beth

Yakima, the juvenile court office.

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 17, 2017, at 12:20 PM, Beth Canfield < <u>acomcast.net</u>> wrote:

I would ask constituent relations what can be done. I will look into it as well and let you know what I find out. Which office is this out of? Take care, Beth

From: RCW 42.56.250(4) [mailto RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, March 17, 2017 12:08 PM

To: Beth Canfield Subject: Re: Attn. Beth

Beth,

Will do. We are anxious to hear what they have to say. I also just spoke with the licensor who is investigating us and she said that she still hasn't heard back from the GAL or CASA from our case. It has been weeks now since she began looking into the allegations and she has tried to contact them via email and phone. They are not responding back to her. I truly believe it is because they know that they made mistakes in our case (mainly the CASA never showed up) and the best interest of the baby was not advocated for. Is there anything that can be done in our case to appeal the court's decision to move the baby, due to lack of involvement and true unbiased advocating from our CASA? And also, shouldn't the department be held accountable to look at the best interest of the child?



Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 17, 2017, at 11:56 AM, Beth Canfield < <u>acomcast.net</u>> wrote:

Please let me know what they have to say. Take care, Beth

From: RCW 42.56.250(4) mailto RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com

Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2017 4:05

To: RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net Subject: Re: Attn. Beth

Constituent relations said that they was looking into it and get back to me by Monday.

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 16, 2017, at 2:21 PM, RCW 13.50.100 <u>acomcast.net</u> wrote:

Have you gotten any responses? Did they tell you that they will look into it?

RCW 42.56.250(4) RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com>

<u>@comcast.net</u>

Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2017 1:24:20 PM

Subject: Re: Attn. Beth Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002241

Yes, both!

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 16, 2017, at 11:43 AM, RCW 13.50.100 @comcast.net wrote:



Have you filed a complaint with the Ombuds office or constituent relations? They would have the ability to look into the safety issues for this child. Beth

From: 'RCW 42.56.250(4)" < RCW 42.56.250(4) @gmail.com>

To: fpaws@fpaws.org

Sent: Wednesday, March 15, 2017 6:17:44 PM

Subject: Attn. Beth

To Whom It May Concern:

Our baby was given a social worker and a couple months later, was assigned a CASA volunteer. We had her for 8 months. During this time we had a couple concerns that were **never addressed** by the Casa or social worker. In the

beginning our concern was about the visitation location. RCW 13.50.100

We accepted a child from the department in June of 2016. RCW 13.50.100

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The child in our care had a dozen family members step forward and the department decided to place the child with the first one that passed a background check. (A great-aunt located 2 ½ hours away) RCW 13.50.100

I brought up this concern with the CASA and she agreed that the child should not be placed there. I shared my concern with the social worker yet the concern was never followed up on.

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This literally made me sick. We understand the department's policy to place the child with family, but we also understand that part of the policy is also to protect

and look after the best interest of the child. We love the child in our home and want the very best for her. We don't understand why the department would overlook what is in this child's best interest. In fact, after doing extensive research and discussing out case with a therapist who specializes in child development and attachment, we have learned that this is very traumatic for children, especially at the 9 month age. We presented this information to our social worker and the GAL. We are devastated that the department would follow policy at the expense of the health and well-being of this child we love.

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shows the child's well being was not considered and now she would endure more trauma that could have been lessened by a transition period.

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Thank you for hearing our concerns. Please call me with any questions.

RCW 42.56.250(4)

RCW 42.56.250(4)@gmail.com // RCW 42.56.250(4)

Sent from my iPhone

To: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)
Date: 4/26/2017 4:27:53 PM

Subject: RE: RCW 42.58

Thank you. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Wednesday, April 26, 2017 8:34 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: West, Norah (DSHS) < westnm@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: RCW 42

Good Morning, Connie. During my 1:1 with Debbie yesterday she mentioned a report that a foster parent is attempting to get Seattle Times reporter to be at a foster parent meeting she's facilitating tomorrow in Vancouver. The meeting will be in the CA office building. This may or may not happen, but I told her that staff should refer any media person to Nora West if in fact this is true.

I'll keep you updated.

Thank you,

Joel Odimba, PhD, ACSW / Regional Administrator Children's Administration, Region 3 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (Tacoma) 253-983-6258 (Olympia) 360-725-6280 / joel.odimba@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Tuesday, April 25, 2017 4:58 PM

To: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA) < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: RCW 42

This is the email about possible media interest in the meeting on Thursday.

If the media does show up I will not allow them in. Probably a long shot.

The screen shots referred to are from a foster parent facebook page with about three foster parents talking about retaliation and possibly referring to RCW 42.56.250(4) although no names are named.

From: Barnett, Terri A. (DSHS/CA) Sent: Monday, April 24, 2017 1:41 PM

To: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) < LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov > Cc: Hardcastle, Cindy (DSHS/CA) < HardcCL@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: RCW4.

FYI

I just got a call from Kim G. She reports that is emailing and trying to get the Seattle Times interested in her cause and also that she wants to get Erin Brockovich.

Kim thinks this could be brought up on Thursday.... Peggy sent those screen shots. I could not make hide or hair of them but I will try to figure out.

This is just FYI

Terri

Terri A. Barnett, MSW Area Administrator Vancouver Cascade Office

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA) Date: 5/30/2017 7:32:58 PM

Subject: FW: Nice meeting you.

Just a heads up. I don't know why the child was removed yet. Following up with DLR. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 11:59 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Fwd: Nice meeting you.

Just an FYI about foster parent Robbie On-Thank who you've probably heard about. RCW 13.50.100 She stated she has hired an attorney.

Thanks,

Joel Odimba, PhD, ACSW / Regional Administrator Children's Administration, Region 3 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (Tacoma) 253-983-6258 (Olympia) 360-725-6280/ joel.odimba@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

Begin Forwarded Message:

From: "Robbie Banks-Onthank" < RCW 42.56.250(4) @hotmail.com>

Subject: Re: Nice meeting you.

Date: 30 May 2017 11:49

To: "Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)" < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Joel.

I just wanted to let you know that your workers wrongfully removed our last little boy, RCW 13.50.100, from school just a little while ago.

He is going to be devastated when he realizes they aren't bringing him home. Not only are we heartbroken, but this is unthinkable for him.

RCW 13.50.100

His removal resulted from the most recent allegation, that came on just last Wednesday, that we "withhold food as punishment". Absolutely not true.

This is a result of retaliation and false allegations from within the Department.

I will be contacting Jennifer Strus immediately. Gary Preble is already made aware.

Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal

I am asking you to put a stop to this madness. Certain workers under your auspices are acting in ways that, not only, runs off quality foster parents but unnecessarily devastates children in the process. And, of course, all this reflects poorly on a system that doesn't receive much positive press in the first place.

I want to be part of the solution- the healing. I want children, families and foster parents to be treated with respect and dignity. I want integrity to guide decision making within the Department. I want everyone involved in these processes to feel safe. I want to help you make this happen. I will not go away.

I am asking for your help.

Robbie

Working with the Department of Children's Services for the Permanency of This Child

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA) < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 9:29:05 AM

To: Robbie Banks-Onthank
Subject: Re: Nice meeting you.

Good Morning, Robbie. I hope you understand that given the occasion of our gathering (foster parent appreciation dinner), I was providing general support to you and your family in my role as the leader of the region. You will recall they I made it clear during our conversation that I cannot comment on an investigation; so my statements were not directed to the investigation; rather to the tough job foster parents do.

The child welfare system is complex and has several challenges (things get thrown at us) that we all face including me, Jennifer Strus, social workers, etc. My other statement "keep standing up to it" was meant to encourage you to hang in there even though things are tough for you right now.

Just wanting to clarify our conversation to avoid any misperception or misunderstanding.

Take care,

Joel Odimba, PhD, ACSW / Regional Administrator Children's Administration, Region 3 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (Tacoma) <u>253-983-6258</u> (Olympia) <u>360-725-6280</u>/ <u>joel.odimba@dshs.wa.gov</u>

Transforming Lives

On: 29 May 2017 20:01, "Robbie Banks-Onthank" <RCW 42.56.250(4) @hotmail.com> wrote:

Dr. Odimba,

Thank you for your attendance at our Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner for the "best region in the state!" Likewise, it was nice meet you and have a face to match the person I have been communicating with about to our current and ongoing experience of being targeted with retaliation from within the Department.

Bill and I appreciated your comments and expressed concern about how we may feel being in this position. Your statement of, "whatever the Department throws at you, keep standing up to it," was particularly valued. Also, much gratitude for encouraging us to contact Assistant Secretary, Jennifer Strus, directly by giving us her email address.

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With regards,

Bill & Robbie Onthank

-Working with the Department for the permanency of this child.

To: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA)

McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA)

Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA)

Date: 5/30/2017 7:34:24 PM Subject: FW: Nice meeting you.

FYI. Looks like the child was removed based on DLR recommendation related to DLR CPS investigation? They will likely be contacting Jennifer....want her to have the story. Thanks, *C.*

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 11:59 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Fwd: Nice meeting you.

Just an FYI about foster parent Robbie On-Thank who you've probably heard about. RCW 13.50.100 She stated she has hired an attorney.

Thanks,

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Transforming Lives

Begin Forwarded Message:

From: "Robbie Banks-Onthank" RCW 42.56.250(4) @hotmail.com>

Subject: Re: Nice meeting you.

Date: 30 May 2017 11:49

To: "Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)" < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Joel,

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He is going to be devastated when he realizes they aren't bringing him home. Not only are we heartbroken, but this is unthinkable for him.

RCW 13.50.100

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I am asking you to put a stop to this madness. Certain workers under your auspices are acting in ways that, not only, runs off quality foster parents but unnecessarily devastates children in the process. And, of course, all this reflects poorly on a system that doesn't receive much positive press in the first place.

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Working with the Department of Children's Services for the Permanency of This Child

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA) < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 9:29:05 AM

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Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002250

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-Working with the Department for the permanency of this child.

To: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA)

Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA)

McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA)

Date: 5/30/2017 7:59:09 PM Subject: RE: Nice meeting you.

Thank you. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 12:52 PM

To: Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA) <EfflaRM@dshs.wa.gov>; Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>; McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA) <MckeoPK@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Nice meeting you.

Pam is writing up a paragraph for Connie. RCW 13.50.100

From: Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 12:51 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >; Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA)

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Connie, I am waiting to hear back from my workers on this. I have done a little research and I believe I have heard about this case.

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Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations

> Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002252

Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 11:59 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: Fwd: Nice meeting you.

Just an FYI about foster parent Robbie On-Thank who you've probably heard about, \mathbb{R}^{6} \mathbb{R}^{6} . She stated she has hired an attorney.

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Transforming Lives

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Date: 30 May 2017 11:49

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Robbie

Working with the Department of Children's Services for the Permanency of This Child

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA) < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 9:29:05 AM

To: Robbie Banks-Onthank Subject: Re: Nice meeting you. Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal

DCYF - 002253

Good Morning, Robbie. I hope you understand that given the occasion of our gathering (foster parent appreciation dinner), I was providing general support to you and your family in my role as the leader of the region. You will recall they I made it clear during our conversation that I cannot comment on an investigation; so my statements were not directed to the investigation; rather to the tough job foster parents do.

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Transforming Lives

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With regards,

Bill & Robbie Onthank

-Working with the Department for the permanency of this child.

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)

Date: 5/30/2017 7:59:49 PM Subject: FW: Nice meeting you.

FYI. Will get you the write up by Pam as soon as it shows. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 12:55 PM

To: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) <hancoda@dshs.wa.gov>; Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

<LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>; McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA) <MckeoPK@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Nice meeting you.

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From: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA)
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 12:52 PM

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201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002255

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From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 11:59 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

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Transforming Lives

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Working with the Department of Children's Services for the Permanency of This Child

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA) < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 9:29:05 AM

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-Working with the Department for the permanency of this child.

To: McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA)

Date: 5/30/2017 8:04:04 PM Subject: RE: Nice meeting you.

Very good. Thank you, Pam. I will make sure this information gets to Jennifer. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA) Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 1:03 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) <hancoda@dshs.wa.gov>; Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA) <EfflaRM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Nice meeting you.

Hi Connie,

DLR CPS was not involved.

RCW 13.50.100

We staffed this foster home with the AAGS office RCW 5.60.060(2)(a)

We asked this family to RCW 13.50.100

They notified us they retained Gary Preval. In the meantime another intake came in for using food as discipline. We staffed again with the AAGS office after RCW 5.60.060(2)(a)

Also the placement desk has been looking for a new family for the child for 2 months due to this family's request.

Let me know if you have other questions,

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 12:34 PM

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Children's Administration, Region 3

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

(Tacoma) 253-983-6258

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Transforming Lives

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Working with the Department of Children's Services for the Permanency of This Child

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA) < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra DCYF - 002260

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 9:29:05 AM

To: Robbie Banks-Onthank **Subject:** Re: Nice meeting you.

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-Working with the Department for the permanency of this child.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)
Date: 5/30/2017 8:05:00 PM

Subject: FW: Nice meeting you.

In case this foster family does reach out to you to complain. See below. Very interesting that the family has been asking for the child to be moved for a couple of months. *C.*

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

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Also the placement desk has been looking for a new family for the child for 2 months due to this family's request.

Let me know if you have other questions, Pam

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 12:34 PM

To: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) < hancoda@dshs.wa.gov >; McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA)

<<u>MckeoPK@dshs.wa.gov</u>>; Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA) <<u>EfflaRM@dshs.wa.gov</u>>

Subject: FW: Nice meeting you.

FYI. Looks like the child was removed based on DLR recommendation related to DLR CPS investigation? They will likely be contacting Jennifer....want her to have the story. Thanks, *C.*

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 11:59 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Fwd: Nice meeting you.

Just an FYI about foster parent Robbie On-Thank who you've probably heard about. RCW 13.50.100

She stated she has hired an attorney.

Thanks,

Joel Odimba, PhD, ACSW / Regional Administrator Children's Administration, Region 3 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (Tacoma) 253-983-6258 (Olympia) 360-725-6280/ joel.odimba@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

Begin Forwarded Message:

From: "Robbie Banks-Onthank" < RCW 42.56.250(4) @hotmail.com>

Subject: Re: Nice meeting you.

Date: 30 May 2017 11:49

To: "Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)" < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Joel,

I just wanted to let you know that your workers wrongfully removed our last little boy, RCW 13.50.100, from school just a little while ago.

He is going to be devastated when he realizes they aren't bringing him home. Not only are we heartbroken, but this is unthinkable for him.

RCW 13.50.100

His removal resulted from the most recent allegation, that came on just last Wednesday, that we "withhold food as punishment". Absolutely not true.

This is a result of retaliation and false allegations from within the Department.

I will be contacting Jennifer Strus immediately. Gary Preble is already made aware.

I am asking you to put a stop to this madness. Certain workers under your auspices are acting in ways that, not only, runs off quality foster parents but unnecessarily devastates children in the process. And, of course, all this reflects poorly on a system that doesn't receive much positive press in the first place.

I want to be part of the solution- the healing. I want children, families and foster parents to be treated with respect and dignity. I want integrity to guide decision making within the Department. I want everyone involved in these processes to feel safe. I want to help you make this happen. I will not go away.

I am asking for your help.

Robbie

Working with the Department of Children's Services for the Permanency of This Child

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA) < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 9:29:05 AM

To: Robbie Banks-Onthank **Subject:** Re: Nice meeting you.

Good Morning, Robbie. I hope you understand that given the occasion of our gathering (foster parent appreciation dinner), I was providing general support to you and your family in my role as the leader of the region. You will recall they I made it clear during our conversation that I cannot comment on an investigation; so my statements were not directed to the investigation; rather to the tough job foster parents do.

The child welfare system is complex and has several challenges (things get thrown at us) that we all face including me, Jennifer Strus, social workers, etc. My other statement "keep standing up to it" was meant to encourage you to hang in there even though things are tough for you right now.

Just wanting to clarify our conversation to avoid any misperception or misunderstanding.

Take care,

Joel Odimba, PhD, ACSW / Regional Administrator Children's Administration, Region 3 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (Tacoma) <u>253-983-6258</u> (Olympia) <u>360-725-6280</u>/ joel.odimba@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

On: 29 May 2017 20:01, "Robbie Banks-Onthank" RCW 42.56.250(4) @hotmail.com > wrote:

Dr. Odimba,

Thank you for your attendance at our Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner for the "best region in the state!" Likewise, it was nice meet you and have a face to match the person I have been communicating with about to our current and ongoing experience of being targeted with retaliation from within the Department.

Bill and I appreciated your comments and expressed concern about how we may feel being in this position. Your statement of, "whatever the Department throws at you, keep standing up to it," was particularly valued. Also, much gratitude for encouraging us to contact Assistant Secretary, Jennifer Strus, directly by giving us her email address.

In our conversation, you stated that you expect your staff to treat foster parents with respect and as an equal part of the team supporting the child. Although we have enjoyed working with some outstanding social workers and Department staff, unfortunately though, being respected has, by and large, not been our experience. So, as a means to "standing up to it", we have contacted an attorney in Olympia, Gary Preble, to represent us in these matters with the state.

It is our desire to continue to provide children in foster care a loving, safe and nurturing home in which to live, laugh and grow. We look forward to continuing to partner with your staff in effectively advocating for the needs of foster children and the families that care for them.

With regards,

Bill & Robbie Onthank Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002265

-Working with the Department for the permanency of this child.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA)

Date: 5/30/2017 8:13:36 PM Subject: RE: Nice meeting you.

Got it. Thanks, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel
Director: Field Operations
Children's Administration
lambecm@dshs.wa.gov
360-902-7982

From: McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA) Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 1:09 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) <hancoda@dshs.wa.gov>; Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA) <EfflaRM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: Nice meeting you.

To clarify-RCW 13.50.100

From: McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA) Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 1:03 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) < hancoda@dshs.wa.gov >; Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA) < EfflaRM@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: RE: Nice meeting you.

Hi Connie,

DLR CPS was not involved.

RCW 13.50.100

We staffed this foster home with the AAGS offic RCW 5.60.060(2)(a)

We asked this family to RCW 13.50.100

They notified us they retained Gary Preval. In the meantime another intake

came in for using food as discipline. We staffed again with the AAGS office RCW 5.60.060(2)(a)

Also the placement desk has been looking for a new family for the child for 2 months due to this family's request.

Let me know if you have other questions, Pam

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002267

Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 12:34 PM

To: Hancock, Darcey (DSHS/CA) < hancoda@dshs.wa.gov >; McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA)

<<u>MckeoPK@dshs.wa.gov</u>>; Effland, Ron (DSHS/CA) <<u>EfflaRM@dshs.wa.gov</u>>

Subject: FW: Nice meeting you.

FYI. Looks like the child was removed based on DLR recommendation related to DLR CPS investigation? They will likely be contacting Jennifer....want her to have the story. Thanks, *C*.

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Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2017 11:59 AM

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Transforming Lives

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Date: 30 May 2017 11:49

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201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002268 reflects poorly on a system that doesn't receive much positive press in the first place.

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Transforming Lives

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In our conversation, you stated that you expect your staff to treat foster parents with respect and as an equal part of the team supporting the child. Although we have enjoyed working with some outstanding social workers and Department staff, unfortunately though, being respected has, by and large, not been our experience. So, as a means to "standing up to it", we have contacted an attorney

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002269

in Olympia, Gary Preble, to represent us in these matters with the state.

It is our desire to continue to provide children in foster care a loving, safe and nurturing home in which to live, laugh and grow. We look forward to continuing to partner with your staff in effectively advocating for the needs of foster children and the families that care for them.

With regards,

Bill & Robbie Onthank

-Working with the Department for the permanency of this child.

From: Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA)

Required: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Subject: CA / Foster Parent meeting - Retaliation

Location: DSHS FA EXEC Conf Room (Max 34, 4th floor)

When: 5/31/2017 5:30:00 PM - 7:00:00 PM

Attachments: Conf Call / Date May 31, 2017/ Time 1030 - 1200 / 100 ports / auto extends on

Connie, could you attend this meeting today w/ Jennifer?

From: WaTech DL TSD Conference Operators

To: <u>Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA)</u>
Date: 4/13/2017 7:59:52 PM

Subject: Conf Call / Date May 31, 2017/ Time 1030 - 1200 / 100 ports / auto extends on

Have a wonderful day!

The approximate cost of this conference call is \$810.00, (100 ports x 90 minutes x .09)

The call in number for the conference bridge is: (360) 407-3780

(security code) PIN Code: RGW 42.56.230 #

For State Conference Operators assistance during your call dial 360-902-3310 or *0 using your Telephone Dialing Pad. State Operators are available only during normal business hours (7:30am-5pm) Monday-Friday

Conference Operators Assistance During Your Call

To report any issues after the call is completed or after normal business hours, please send an email to disdits donnéerence operators @watech.wa.gov.

Auto Ports are subject to availability

Participant Telephone Dial Pad Commands

*0 - Operator Assistance

*6 - Mute/Un-Mute Own Line

Cancellations/Rescheduling/Modifications

Cancellations and rescheduling must be made 1 hour before the conference call is initiated to avoid charges. To modify a conference call, allow 1 hour before the conference call begins.

Thank You,

WaTechConference Operators/E 360-902-3310 disdltsdconferenceoperators@watech.wa.gov



From: Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, April 13, 2017 12:45 PM

To: WaTech DL TSD Conference Operators <DISDLTSDConferenceOperators@watech.wa.gov>

Subject: Large meet me call

For May 31 from 10:30-12:00 for a 100 ports - is this possible?

Diana Wardor / Executive Secretary
Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-7821 / hardedx@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)
To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)

Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 5/31/2017 3:24:48 PM

Subject: CA / Foster Parent meeting - Retaliation

Attachments: Conf Call / Date May 31, 2017/ Time 1030 - 1200 / 100 ports / auto extends on

Connie, could you attend this meeting today w/ Jennifer?

From: WaTech DL TSD Conference Operators

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Date: 4/13/2017 7:59:52 PM

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The approximate cost of this conference call is \$810.00, (100 ports x 90 minutes x .09)

The call in number for the conference bridge is: (360) 407-3780

(security code) PIN Code: RCW 42.56.2301 #

For State Conference Operators assistance during your call dial 360-902-3310 or *0 using your Telephone Dialing Pad. State Operators are available only during normal business hours (7:30am-5pm) Monday-Friday

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Diana Wardor / Executive Secretary
Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-7821 / hardedx@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA)

Date: 5/31/2017 11:22:41 PM

Subject: RE: Ray Deck

Hi Pam....

Ray was present at a meeting this morning with an array of caregivers, legislator, etc.... This meeting was scheduled after a 1624 meeting where 'retaliation' came up over and over. Jennifer agreed to hold this special meeting....the first of which was cancelled due to the illness and subsequent death in Jennifer's family. Ray did not say much other than he wanted to work towards a solution.

Darcey did let me know about the problem with his quals. I am eager to hear more about this.... Are you still available? *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: McKeown, Pamela (DSHS/CA)
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 12:00 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Ray Deck

Hi Connie,

I understand that Ray Deck is meeting with Jennifer today. I know that Darcey was planning to have a discussion with you tomorrow about Skookum Kids and Ray so you probably don't have details of our issues yet.

The AA called me and said that RCW 13.50.100

I am available to fill you in if you like.

Pamela McKeown
Department of Social and Health Services
Children's Administration- Division of Licensed Resources
Deputy
(360) 651-6898
Pamela.mckeown@dshs.wa.gov

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)
Date: 5/31/2017 11:26:16 PM

Subject: RE: Vancouver foster parent situation

Hi Joel...

No....no AIRS at this time is needed. DLR is aware and I have briefed Jennifer.

Jennifer held a meeting today with caregivers, as follow up to a 1624 meeting, where caregivers expressed significant concern about 'retaliation' (we will brief you all on the meeting at CALT during our Field Ops only time next week). It went pretty much as expected but this caregiver called in and was quite animated....a kid was removed from her care yesterday (at school) and she learned of the revocation that is now moving forward. She was insisting she needed help today, that her character was being assassinated....had to hire an attorney etc.... she did not get much engagement or support. Thanks, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 12:38 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: West, Norah (DSHS) < westnm@dshs.wa.gov>
Subject: FW: Vancouver foster parent situation

Hi Connie,

FYI, this foster parent has established a GOFUNDME account to raise funds to sue CA.

I do not think this requires an AIRS be done; but let me know if we should do one.

Joel

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 12:35 PM

To: Teeter, Anita (DSHS/CA) < TeeteAD@dshs.wa.gov>
Cc: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) < LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov>
Subject: RE: Vancouver foster parent situation

I don't think this requires an AIRS but I'll forward to Connie and others.

 $\textbf{Joel Odimba, PhD, ACSW} \ / \ \text{Regional Administrator}$

Children's Administration, Region 3 Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (Tacoma) 253-983-6258 (Olympia) 360-725-6280 / joel.odimba@dshs.wa gov

Transforming Lives

From: Teeter, Anita (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 10:34 AM

To: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA) < ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov Cc: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) < LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: Vancouver foster parent situation

Good Morning Joel,

Below is a link to a GOFUNDME account by Vancouver Foster Parent RCW 42.56.250(4)

Do you think this meets the media requirement of an AIRS?

https://RCW 13.50.100

From: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 6/6/2017 5:03:26 AM

Subject: FW: Follow up regarding RCW 13.50.100

More on the case discussed at the retaliation meeting - the one I already had Becky look at and you review.

From: Chris Moody [mailto: RCW 13.50.100 @gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, June 2, 2017 5:18 PM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA) <strusj@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Follow up regarding RCW 13.50.100

Hello Jennifer, thanks again for the forum earlier this week in Olympia. I had many positive conversations with other attendees. It truly feels like a positive incremental step towards real solutions.

I wanted to reach out with my contact information should you have any questions about the case we discussed. As I mentioned some of the reports to court were incorrect and not fixed even after I asked the SW to update. So I'd be happy to clarify or recap anything. I have emails of most of these interactions. RCW 13.50.100

I'm sharing this because I am concerned that the department is controlling the narrative and this information may not be in the case notes.

RCW 13.50.100

thanks,

Chris Moody RCW 13.50.100

LinkedIn Profile

From: <u>Lambert-Eckel Connie (DSHS/CA)</u>

To: <u>Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)</u>
Date: 6/12/2017 3:38:07 PM

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

Attachments: The Foster Innovation Lab - Phase 1 Report (1) (1).pdf

Hi..

Just making sure that there are no expectations about engaging with this group that I am unaware of. If there are not, I will support Joel's position of non-engagement. Thanks, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 10:13 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) <LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Fwd: The Foster Innovation Lab

Hi Connie -

Debbie forwarded this to us. I've not heard of this group as there are many entities out there that are doing different things "for foster care".

Perhaps you've heard about them? I don't intend on following up with them; nor will I ask Debbie to do anything with the group.

Just letting you know.

Joel Odimba, PhD, ACSW / Regional Administrator

Children's Administration, Region 3

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

(Tacoma) 253-983-6258

(Olympia) 360-725-6280/ joel.odimba@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: "Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA)" < <u>LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov</u>>

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

Date: 07 June 2017 15:43

 $\textbf{To: "Devoy, Peggy (DSHS/CA)"} < \underline{\textbf{DevoyPR@dshs.wa.gov}} >, "Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)" < \underline{\textbf{ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov}} > \\ | \textbf{Note of the performance of the performa$

Anyone heard of this group?

From: Patty FL [mailto:patty@fosterinnovationlab.com]

Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 10:42 AM

Taylora, Dobbie (DSUS/CA) class Dob @dcbs. wa. gov.

To: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) < LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: The Foster Innovation Lab

Hi Debbie,

Becca Curzon sent me your address that she collected at the Foster Parent and Area Administrator Forum. Thank you!

From a deep desire for change, The Foster Innovation Lab was formed by 4 foster and adoptive moms. We have spent the last 10 months working together to build a tribe of like-minded people who not only desire change but are willing to step up and participate. We are delighted that you have signed up and are requesting additional information about our work. I am attaching a copy of the report we generated from 6 months of data collected in both weekly and monthly surveys from a dedicated group of foster parents.

Your address will also be added to our mailing list so you will get consistent updates on our progress. We would love to hear any feedback you might have as we spend time this summer developing our Phase II. Please take a moment to check out our website and join our FaceBook page.

I would love to hear from you!

Patty and the rest of the team at The Lab



thefosterinnovationlab.com



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Foster Innovation Lab exists to inspire positive change within foster care by creating a culture of innovation, creativity, and shared learning.

We do this by clarifying challenges, facilitating collaboration, and promoting better conversations.

This document provides an overview of our six-month alpha phase, affectionately called Phase One. We have used a show-and-tell approach to demonstrate how business principles, such as continuous improvement, can have an impact on the current challenges facing the Washington state foster care system.

Over the past six months we have collected piles of data, clarified problems, tested solutions - all with the goal of sparking a culture that embraces creativity and collaborative learning. This report reviews the seven Key Learnings that have come out of Phase One.

- **Learning 1**: We started The Lab to see if we could grow a tribe of people interested in solving problems differently. That tribe is growing.
- **Learning 2**: Progress with the foster care community is slowed by exhaustion, distrust, and large gaps in existing communication systems.
- **Learning 3**: Our data shows that over 50% of families are either undecided or unlikely to renew their foster care license.
- **Learning 4**: Important communication points, such as hearings and <u>Health and Safety visits</u>, aren't working as might be expected.
- **Learning 5:** Our satisfaction ratings all came back in the midrange, which likely reflects that we weren't asking the right questions.
- **Learning 6**: Foster parents expect this experience to be hard, but sometimes it is the unexpected <u>visitation</u> and scheduling chaos that pushes families over the edge.
- **Learning 7**: The anger and hopelessness that pervade the system are understandable, but also create an obstacle for driving change and are an important area to focus efforts.

These learnings are not surprising, nor are they the end of the story. These are themes that have impacted the foster care system for decades. By looking at them in a new way - with data that digs beneath the surface and an approach that focuses on small, continuous changes - we are hopeful that we can truly begin to drive innovation.



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SPOILER ALERT

If you've been around the foster care system for a while, you are not going to find the information in this report surprising. The same problems have been around for years.

Very few of the known issues have been fully quantified and categorized, which is what we have started to do. You can't fix what you can't measure.

In the following pages, we are going to take a look at some of the most common problems through a different lens. When it comes to actually making a difference in changing this system, the key is to start tackling the small problems one at a time.



OUR STORY

We are four current and former foster moms that feel passionately about helping foster children. We came to a point where fostering alone didn't feel like enough. We watched helplessly as the consequences of a broken system impacted the kids in our care. We wanted to see change so desperately and then wondered if we felt this way, surely there must be others who felt the same. Out of this passion and curiosity, The Lab was born.



Describing the journey to create The Foster Innovation Lab is challenging. If you've found yourself perplexed by what we're doing, you aren't alone. We've had those moments ourselves.

Over the course of many online hangouts after our kids went to bed (we have 9 children between us), we clarified our vision and forged ahead. The Foster Innovation Lab began out of Shannon's experiences as a foster mom, her time on the 1624 board, a Hackathon at the White House, and her professional consulting experience - all of which shaped her perspective about how systematic change can take place. Those experiences paired well with Lori's business and writing skills, Patty's background in nonprofit finance, and my experience in education, curriculum development, and nonprofit leadership. Together, we are a dynamic team.

This combination of parenting and professional experiences led to a willingness to stand in the uncomfortable tension of not completely understanding, but recognizing a deep need for a shift in the experience of out-of-home caregivers. We had to move beyond simply sharing our individual stories and seeing the brokenness; we had to enter in and engage in the improvement process.

Over the last nine months, a lot has changed. We've become an official nonprofit organization, consulted with state representatives, and built a pool of foster parents who are willing to provide survey after survey. In many ways, our data and experiences over the last 9 months have reinforced what we thought we knew, but much has challenged our ideas and led us to ask additional questions. We hope it does the same for you.

- Mackenzie

THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT US:

INDEPENDENT:

We are unfunded and independent of Children's Administration or any other organization. This was a deliberate decision, and although we have and will continue collaborating with other organizations, the flexibility of going in any direction that our research and data might lead was important to us.

WILLING TO FAIL:

Our attitude throughout Phase One has been "let's give it a shot." We have given it our best and are looking forward to sharing both the successes and failures with everyone, because it is the failures that are often the most helpful.

SERIOUS ABOUT BEING INFORMAL:

Our tone in this document (and everything we do) is more informal than you might expect. We believe that collaborative, creative conversations are the key to change. And when it comes to starting conversations, we far prefer to be informal and friendly.



THE CURRENT SITUATION

The problems within foster care are messy and overwhelming. Solving them is about as straightforward as herding squirrels.

With a squirt gun. In a thunderstorm.

After spending a considerable amount of time trying to help solve those problems through official channels, we started The Lab to try something different. We wondered what would happen if we created a way to demonstrate incremental, measured improvement methods that are common within private industry, but relatively unknown within foster care.

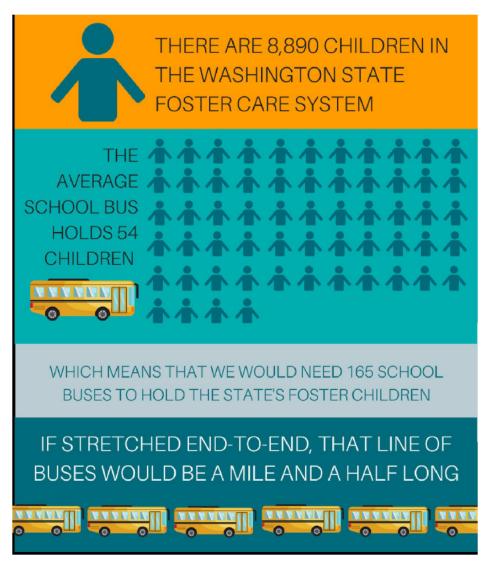
We chose these methods because they are slow, deliberate, and easily adjusted. There is no magic bullet for foster care. Instead, we need to work together to creatively and collaboratively tackle the current challenges.

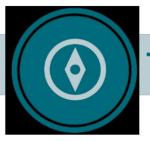
Like any faithful believers in agility, our goals have shifted throughout this process. During our initial six-month alpha phase, we have watched, listened, and wondered.

And like many of you, we have also questioned whether the system can really change. We've sometimes felt overwhelmed and hopeless in our efforts, but we've continued to push forward because, here's the thing:

There are currently 8,890¹ kids in foster care in Washington state.

So sure. We are tired and stressed, but we have a choice about whether we remain connected to this system. These 8,890 kids do not. They are stuck and they deserve better.





THE CURRENT SITUATION

Washington State has a foster care crisis. There are approximately 5,144² licensed foster homes in Washington state. And while the math might seem to work at first glance (assuming that each home could take about 2 kids), the reality is that the numbers don't work. Many of those homes are full, or not taking additional children, or not qualified to take some of the highest-need placements. The result is that placement desks are struggling to find homes for children, and unfortunately, that means that some of our state's most vulnerable children are spending nights in DSHS offices, hotels, or with foster parents who agree to take them for one night only.

This further traumatizes that child and is stretching the system's resources to the max.



The number of nights kids that stayed in hotels ncreased more than seven-fold over the last ear. In the past 12 months there were 883 lacement exceptions involving 221 children, compared to just 120 exceptions involving 72 kids in the previous year, according to the state Office of Family and Children's Ombuds, which handles complaints about the foster care system. Nearly all occurred in Region 2 last year, with 57 percent in King County. Almost all were hotel stays, but in a few cases kids also stayed in DSHS offices.

In addition to the cost of the hotel room, the state must pay two social workers, and sometimes a security guard, who stay awake all night supervising the children."

Allegra Abramo & Susanna Ray https://kcts9.org/programs/system-in-crisis/foster-car e-crisis

Foster children are spending the night in hotels and bouncing from home to home.

They deserve better. A child's experiences in foster care affect the rest of their lives, the lives of their future children, and generations to come.

This affects all of us, whether we are connected to foster care or not.

Let's talk about what can be done.



THE CURRENT SITUATION

THERE IS NO MAGIC BULLET FOR **FIXING FOSTER CARE**

If created, the transition to the new Department of Children, Youth, and

Families is a great step. However, we also need to address the current culture of fear within the system, in which fear overrides creativity and there is far more contention than collaboration. Fixing the cultural challenges will be a slow, steady process.

But it is not impossible by any means.

We built The Lab to demonstrate some of the business principles that are used by leading companies. Each of these concepts can directly and successfully start to unravel the problems facing the system.

We have built The Lab as an experiment in show-and-tell. Sure, we can talk about how these methods could be helpful, but isn't it always better to demonstrate?

KEY CONCEPTS

Continuous Improvement:

Originally developed to improve manufacturing, continuous improvement is focused on making small, iterative changes in order to improve overall functioning.

Agile Development:

Likewise, agile development is also focused on small, iterative changes.

Design Thinking:

A method of simplifying and solving complex problems by relying on creative, visual methods.

Collaborative Learning:

Shared knowledge is the most powerful knowledge. Collaborative learning means that we work to combine the learnings of many in order to move us all forward.

OUR PROCESS HAS FOLLOWED THREE STEPS:

CLARIFY THE EXPERIMENT LEARN AND WITH SOLUTIONS PROBLEM SHARE

REPEAT

CLARIFY THE PROBLEM

We did this in two ways:

- 1. First, we built a pool of foster parents who completed surveys over the course of six months in order to build a foundation of data to drive our efforts.
- 2. Second, we started by focusing in on three specific user stories. A user story is simply a specific and clear problem that needs to be solved.

USER STORIES			
Visitation Scheduling	Delivery of Caregiver Reports	Access to Childcare	
As a foster parent, I want to be adequately notified of changes to the visitation plan, so that I can plan my family's schedule accordingly.	As a foster parent, I want to receive confirmation that my caregiver report to the court was received by the judge/commissioner, so that I know my voice was heard.	As a foster parent, I need to be able to find childcare that accepts state payment, so that I can continue to foster and keep my job.	

2

EXPERIMENT WITH SOLUTIONS

As mentioned, The Lab is an experiment in and of itself. We were testing to see what would happen if we tried a show-and-tell method. Additionally, we ran experiments specifically to see if we could impact the user stories. For a full description of each experiment, please visit our website. We will share about how those experiments went in our second Key Learning.

3

LEARN AND SHARE

And finally, the entire point is to learn and share and then begin the cycle again. Our hope is to help build a tribe of people who are willing to risk, quick to embrace the learnings that come from failure, and committed to building a community of collaborative learning.

We have walked out of Phase One with seven Key Learnings. As you will see, these Learnings provide insight, but they also create questions. Because good data should build better questions - and the cycle of clarifying, experimenting, and learning can start again.



TRIBE IS GROWING

GAPS

EXPECTED

OVERWHELMING CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: OUR TRIBE IS GROWING

One of our big questions in Phase 1 was simply, "If we provide an example of using continuous improvement within the foster care system, will anyone find it interesting?"

From what we can tell, the answer is yes. We are slowly building a tribe that is engaged and interested.



OUR TRIBE IS GROWING

A GROWING CURIOSITY

Our core goal in Phase One was not huge numbers, but instead we wanted to create pockets of curiosity. We wanted a core group of people who were intrigued and interested in learning more. From that standpoint, we are very please with the numbers below, which show us that a our tribe is growing and engaged.

If you are one of those subscribers or followers, thank you, we're glad you're here. If you don't subscribe, head on over to our website and jump on the bandwagon. All the cool kids are doing it.

	ENGAGEMI	ENT METRICS	
637	308	43.4%	239
website visitors*	email subscribers	average email open rate**	Facebook followers

^{*}Visitor total begins on December 1st in order to exclude traffic from Pool recruiting.

THREE CHEERS FOR THE POOL

Furthermore, our amazing pool of foster parents was committed and consistent about providing both weekly and monthly surveys. In this first phase, we did not have a statistically significant number of respondents. However, as an alpha, these responses still provide very helpful insight and directional data. This data will be expanded upon in future phases.

92 poo	ol membe	ers subn	nitted:
11	635	5	267
weekly	weekly	monthly	monthly
surveys	survey	surveys	survey
	responses		responses

^{**} Industry average is 20.07%. Also, email open rate excludes Pool emails in order to avoid skewing the data.



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST, AND COMMUNICATION GAPS

A combination of exhaustion and distrust, as well as gaps in existing communication channels hindered progress - and will be a challenge in future efforts.



EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST, COMMUNICATION

EXHAUSTION

Many people within the foster care system are completely exhausted. Shocking, right? We know, this is a fairly obvious statement, but when considering solutions, it's important to lay out all of the contributing factors, even the obvious ones. Throughout Phase One we continuously saw that even when people wanted to get involved to help drive change, feelings of being exhausted and emotionally overwhelmed would sometimes get in the way.

DISTRUST

Furthermore, mixed with that exhaustion is a deep sense of distrust. Especially because we were new and unknown, we saw a lot of early interest, but hesitation to fully commit. We heard messages of distrust in several ways:

- Who are you and are you connected to Children's Administration? Unfortunately, there is a lot of fear within foster care, which is a large part of why we were careful with our identities. That fear went both ways, as early audiences were suspicious of our intentions and whether we were connected to CA.
- How do I know that this is going to make a difference? Perhaps even more prevalent was a distrust of whether any time or energy invested in The Lab would actually result in change. The problems within the system have been the same for decades, and understandably there is a hesitance to spend time or energy trying to make a difference.

COMMUNICATION

Communication within foster care is challenging, to say the least. There is no one way to communicate with foster parents. Some are licensed through the state; some are licensed through private agencies and they might receive information differently. Some information is disseminated through Facebook groups, some through email lists, some through foster parent support groups, and some directly through social worker interactions.

Additionally, sometimes the answers to the same question vary greatly based on who you ask. Different regions, counties, supervisors, and social workers at times provide different answers to the same question. For example, when we were fine-tuning our experiments, we spent a lot of time confirming policy around things like submitting a caregiver report. We would receive different answers based on who we asked, what county they were in, and what role they had.

Again, none of these three points is surprising, but when we sat down for our retrospective conversations, these themes came up again and again, which makes them important to note and consider when planning future efforts.



EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST, COMMUNICATION

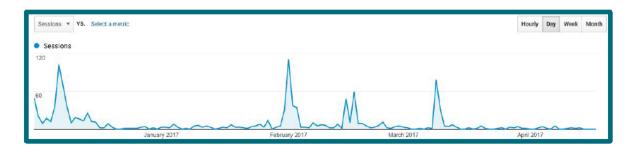
IMPACT

These dynamics had some important impacts on Phase One and will be a key consideration as we plan Phase Two. Two core areas of impact:

Pool Participants: One of the first places we noticed the impact was in building our foster parent pool. We had almost 200 foster parents originally raise their hands to join the pool. However, in order to guarantee case confidentiality and data quality, we asked all participants to watch a 15-minute training video prior to participating. Only 92 caregivers completed that training.

Volunteers: We had quite a few volunteers raise their hands and offer to help with everything from experiments to analysis, but unfortunately, the majority were unable to follow through as planned. (If you are one of them, don't worry, we completely understand. No blame here, just unpacking the process.)

Because of this, we have made several adjustments throughout the process based on our internal bandwidth. One of those things, as you likely noticed if you are a subscriber, is that we almost completely stopped sharing content at two points. As you can see below in our web traffic, visits to our site are directly tied to the content we are pushing out (as expected). In both January and April we produced very little content as we worked to finalize both experiment design and analysis, respectively.



We saw a similar dynamic play out in our experiments. There was a spike of traffic upon the announcement of the experiments, as well as smaller spikes each time we pushed a reminder. Unfortunately, that traffic would level out within hours.

These traffic flows were telling us that we needed to approach this differently. We were not getting enough traffic to get statistically-relevant data without making constant noise. Not only did we not have enough bandwidth to constantly push content, but we definitely did not want to be another source of obnoxious noise. So we eventually decided to pause experiments and take this as a learning.



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

EXPECTED

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: 50% ATTRITION RISK

The number of foster homes is already alarmingly low, and if things go really poorly, we could be looking at an attrition rate of up to 50%.

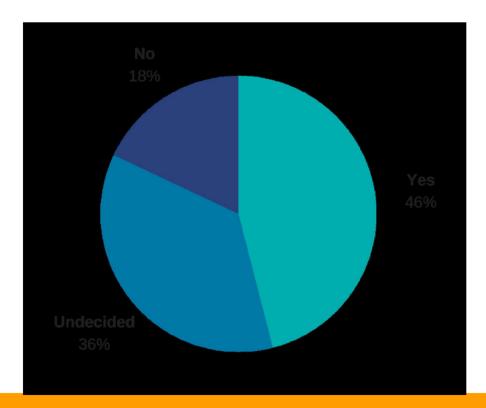


RISK OF 50% ATTRITION

If a large part of the current crisis is that there are not currently enough homes for the kids that need them, an important part of stabilizing the system is to increase the number of licensed homes. While recruiting new homes is always important, it is more important to retain the existing homes.

Let's take a look at what we found about whether foster parents intend to stay, as well as the reasons behind their choices.

WE ASKED, "ARE YOU PLANNING TO RENEW YOUR LICENSE?":





54% answered Unlikely, Highly Unlikely, or Undecided



Crises were happening so fast and we were not able to get services and things addressed fast enough. The foster child, our children, our community, and our marriage were greatly affected and it could have potentially all been prevented if we knew more of her back story.



RISK OF 50% ATTRITION

TOP FIVE REASONS:

LIKELY TO RENEW	
Helping the kids	37%
Good caseworkers	20%
High need for caregivers	17%
Making a difference	10%
Long-term placement	10%
UNDECIDED	
Permanency takes too long	27%
Lack of support	27%
Lied to by the state	13%
Lack of information about the kids	13%
Frustration with the system	7%
UNLIKELY TO RENEW	
Disrespect	22%
Retaliation	22%
Visitation Issues	17%
Best interest of the bio parents over best interest of the child	13%
Lack of communication	9%

^{*} These categories arose out of our open text analysis, which we will explain further in Learning 5.



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

NOT WORKING AS **EXPECTED**

CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

Foster parents have several key points of contact with their social workers, judges, and other important team members. As you can imagine, it is critically important that these points of contact are functioning properly, since they are the main way that information about both the child's well-being and case updates are transferred. However, our data shows that there may be some very important gaps.



HEALTH AND SAFETY VISITS:

For those unfamiliar with foster care, Children's Administration defines Health and Safety visits as face-to-face visits with children who have an open case with Children's Administration and regular visits with out-of-home caregivers and all known parents provides opportunity for ongoing assessments of the health, safety, and well-being of children. Regular visits with out-of-home caregivers increase opportunities to monitor child safety, can promote permanency, and provides the worker with information they can share with the parent. Regular visits with parents can provide the parent with reassuring information about how his/her child is doing in placement, monitors progress with services and case goals, shorten length-of-stay and achieve permanency more quickly.³



32

comments indicating a positive experience

52

comments indicating that the visit was done by a courtesy worker, at an alternate location, or that the social worker didn't have information available



The only chance I have for updates on the progress of the case for the child in our home is during the Health and Safety visits. These visits aren't just about the child and the appropriateness of our home, but a time to exchange information. Unfortunately, in our case my social worker has only come to our home once in 16 months. Twelve of the sixteen visits have happened at our foster daughter's daycare when I have not been notified and therefore not present. Three of them took place in a DSHS lobby so she could make sure the child was safe and healthy, but did not provide an opportunity for me to talk about her progress or any concerns. This has left me without information and feeling frustrated as the case has dragged on.

To be clear, I am not criticizing my social worker. She has a caseload with more than double the acceptable number of cases and has to do at least 8 health and safety visits in one day in order to accomplish all that her job requires. What I am saying is that I don't feel communicated with. I don't know what's going on in our foster daughter's case, and I therefore don't know how to best support and advocate for her.



An 80% completion rate is concerning, but what caught our attention is those 52 comments that mention an alternate location, courtesy worker, or that the social worker did not have information about the case available.



Why are we concerned about this detail? Shouldn't we just focus on getting 80% closer to 100%?

No, and allow us to digress for a moment to explain. For various reasons, foster parents are often outside of the communication process. They receive very little background about the child they are caring for and are only notified about things like hearings or shared planning meetings when their social worker notifies them.

To put it another way, the people who have the most responsibility for providing direct care for the kids often have the least amount of information and are the last to know about important meetings or hearings. One of the key options they have for getting updates is at Health and Safety visits, so if that visit is held elsewhere or by a social worker unfamiliar with the case, the visit might happen, but that foster parent is not receiving information.

Not only is it important that the well-being of the child is being confirmed at these visits, but the conversation between social worker and foster parent is essential to ongoing retention. In the 32 comments that mentioned the Health and Safety visit was a pleasant experience, it was clear that the experience made the foster parents feel valued and respected.



Whether this data is an accurate representation of the statewide Health & Safety experience remains to be determined.

Phase 1 of The Lab was an alpha (or a pilot, depending on which word tickles your fancy). Our sample size is relatively small and skews to the western side of the state.

However, it is more insight than existed previously and definitely enough to be considered directional. Directional data is like a strange smell in your refrigerator. It tells us that there is potentially something important happening and more investigation needs to happen.

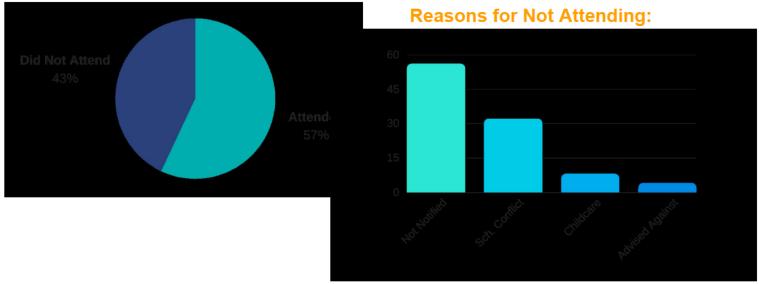


SHARED PLANNING MEETINGS

Children's Administration uses a Shared Planning model to work with families in addressing a variety of needs across the life of a case. The Shared Planning model includes families, youth, relatives, fictive kin, natural supports and others who can assist in the development of a plan that prioritizes child safety and meets the support and service needs of parents, children and caregivers. An inclusive model provides an opportunity for information to be shared, case plans to be developed and decisions made that will support the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.4

* Similarly, Family Team Decision Making meetings bring all parties together to discuss movement of children. For the sake of clarity, both types of meetings have been grouped in our data and explanations.

60 TOTAL MEETINGS REPORTED





It is frustrating when we are the ones who spend the most time and energy with the foster children but are not included, and often not involved at all, in big decisions regarding their future.

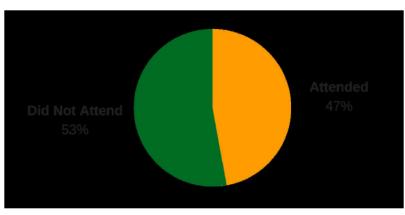


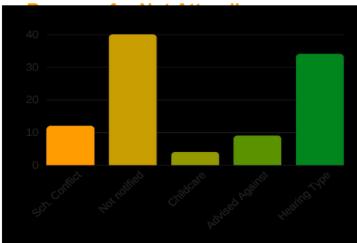
HEARINGS

There are several types of hearings for children in out-of-home care. Some happen on a regular rotation, generally every six months. Some are scheduled last-minute, such as when an emergency occurs or a party petitions the judge regarding something like travel. We won't go into extensive detail about each, since that is outside of the scope of this document.

Overall, these hearings are again one of the most important places for a foster parent to receive information and provide feedback to the judge about how the children in their care are doing.

104 TOTAL HEARINGS REPORTED







I was given one sentence to describe why they were in care. Without knowing the children's past it was impossible to know what triggers might set them off, what therapies might be most helpful, what language to use or avoid. Also, I wasn't able to alleviate their confusion about why they were in care, leaving the oldest in particular, with a feeling of chaos and a need to constantly question everyone's motivations for their choices regarding him being in care.

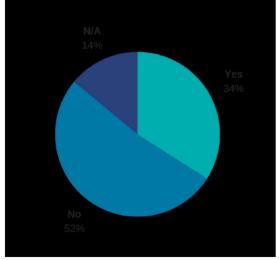


CAREGIVER REPORTS TO THE COURT

Judges or commissioners are responsible for making many of the big decisions for kids in out-of-home care and they rely on various sources of input in order to make the best decision. From the caregiver, they receive that input through a document called the Caregiver Report to the Court⁵. This document covers a wide variety of information about the child's well-being, is completed by the caregiver, and delivered to the court either directly or through the social worker.

This document is one of the few places where a caregiver gets to provide input into the future of the children in their care.

WE ASKED "DID YOU SUBMIT A CAREGIVER REPORT?":





"If you submitted a caregiver report, was it received?"

48% Yes | 51% Unsure

What does that mean that the caregiver is unsure if the report was received?

In most counties, foster parents submit their caregiver reports to their social worker, who is then responsible for submitting it to the court. Which means that if the foster parent does not receive an email confirmation, or if the judge doesn't mention it in the hearing, they are unsure about whether it was received.

Why didn't 52% submit?

Most respondents indicated that they either didn't receive enough notice of a hearing (caregiver reports can take hours to prepare) or they didn't understand the process.

Why are reports not applicable in 14% of the hearings?

Some hearing types do not require a caregiver report.





But can't foster parents just check in with their social worker to get that information?

Sure. They can call or email their social workers at any point.

But have you ever been overwhelmed with your job and had to prioritize tasks? Social workers are chronically overwhelmed. So while they may want nothing more than to check in about a case, they often have to prioritize, and unfortunately, administrative tasks are what often get dropped.

of responses listed social worker communication as their biggest challenge



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

LESSON OF MEH

CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: LESSON OF MEH

When collecting satisfaction information, we asked Pool participants to rate a wide variety of experiences on a rating of either 1-5 or 1-10. And overall, all responses were mid-range. We translate mid-range to "meh."



THE LESSON OF MEH



WE ASKED, "PLEASE RATE YOUR SATISFACTION WITH THE **FOLLOWING**":

	Average	Median
OVERALL SATISFACTION * Overall Satisfaction was provided on a scale from 1 - 10, with 1 being low. Other ratings are 1-5.	6.02	6
Your involvement in creation of the visitation schedule	2.94	3
Notice of any visitation schedule changes	3.03	3
How the meeting (SPM, FTDM) was scheduled and communicated	2.79	3
The experience in the meeting (SPM, FTDM)	2.89	3
The outcome of the meeting (SPM, FTDM)	2.87	3
Your notification of the hearing schedule	2.97	3
Your experience with the hearing	2.79	3
The outcome of the hearing	2.86	3
How the Health and Safety visit was scheduled and communicated	3.68	3
The experience of the Health and Safety visit	3.65	3

WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

It tells us that more information is needed. We need to ask more questions - and potentially better questions. True, satisfaction may actually be meh, but what concerns us is that the open-text comments we received, as well as what we consistently see across Facebook groups and other mediums, is that foster parents are far from meh. This incongruence tells us that we need to do some further investigation.



TOP 5 WINS

THE LESSON OF MEH

Because we saw this ambiguity in our rating system, we spent a large amount of time reviewing and categorizing comments. When designing our surveys, we were careful to leave multiple open-text opportunities for people to provide open feedback. We took those open text fields and categorized them, which means that we read through all comments, marked down common themes, and then formally worked our way backwards to categorize and quantify those comments.

If you are a Pool member that took the time to tell us a little more about a situation, thank you. Your words are important and we have spent a lot of time with them.

This time paid off in several very helpful insights. For example, below you can see a categorization of what foster parents said were their greatest wins and greatest challenges over the course of five monthly surveys:

Foster child obtaining/receiving needed physical health, mental health, or education services	12%
Foster child improvement in development/hitting new milestones	12%
Communicating and working with SW, GAL, CASA	11%
Case moving forward toward permanence	10%
Successful transition in or out of the foster home	8%
TOP 5 CHALLENGES	
Poor communication with SW	20%
Foster child's behavior and health	17%
Lack of information and answers	10%
Transitioning foster child out of current placement	9%

Delays in case, long periods of waiting

8%



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

> **50% ATTRITION RISK**

NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

LESSON OF MEH

OVERWHELMING CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: OVERWHELMING CHAOS

Foster parents do not expect an easy experience. However, one thing we clearly saw was that some of the inefficiencies of the system add an additional layer of chaos to the foster family's life - and it is that additional layer that is sometimes the breaking point.



KEY LEARNING: CHAOS

Please take a moment to imagine the chaos that some foster families face. They are introduced to a child they have never met and know nothing about. They may or may not be given key information (sometimes because it's just not available) about allergies, food preferences, schedule, school, fears, etc. They are not always told how long the child will stay, if there are visits with biological family, or when there will be a court date for the child. The foster parent then makes it their job to get to know this child and learn everything about them.

All of these areas of chaos are difficult, but what can sometimes push a family over the edge are the daily additions to that chaos. Imagine for a second that you are parenting a baby that does not nap on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays because of visits. Or, imagine that you take the four hours that are scheduled for a visit to run errands or attend an appointment - but that parent doesn't show up, so the visit is cancelled and you need to immediately drop your plans and adjust accordingly.

This is not a debate about the importance of visitation and reunification - we fully support both. But if we are trying to find ways to retain foster homes and stabilize the system, the impact of these areas of chaos cannot be ignored.



Visitation and last-minute scheduling appeared to be a large part of that feeling of chaos.

CHAOS CONTRIBUTORS

32% of total visits **VISIT: MISSED NAPS**

16% of total visits VISIT: NO SHOW

15% of total visits VISIT: DURATION CHANGE

HEALTH & SAFETY: LAST MINUTE SCHEDULING 29 reports

VISIT: TRANSPORTATION OF 3+ HOURS 124 reports

VISIT: TIME IN TRANSPORT LONGER THAN TIME IN VISIT 41 reports